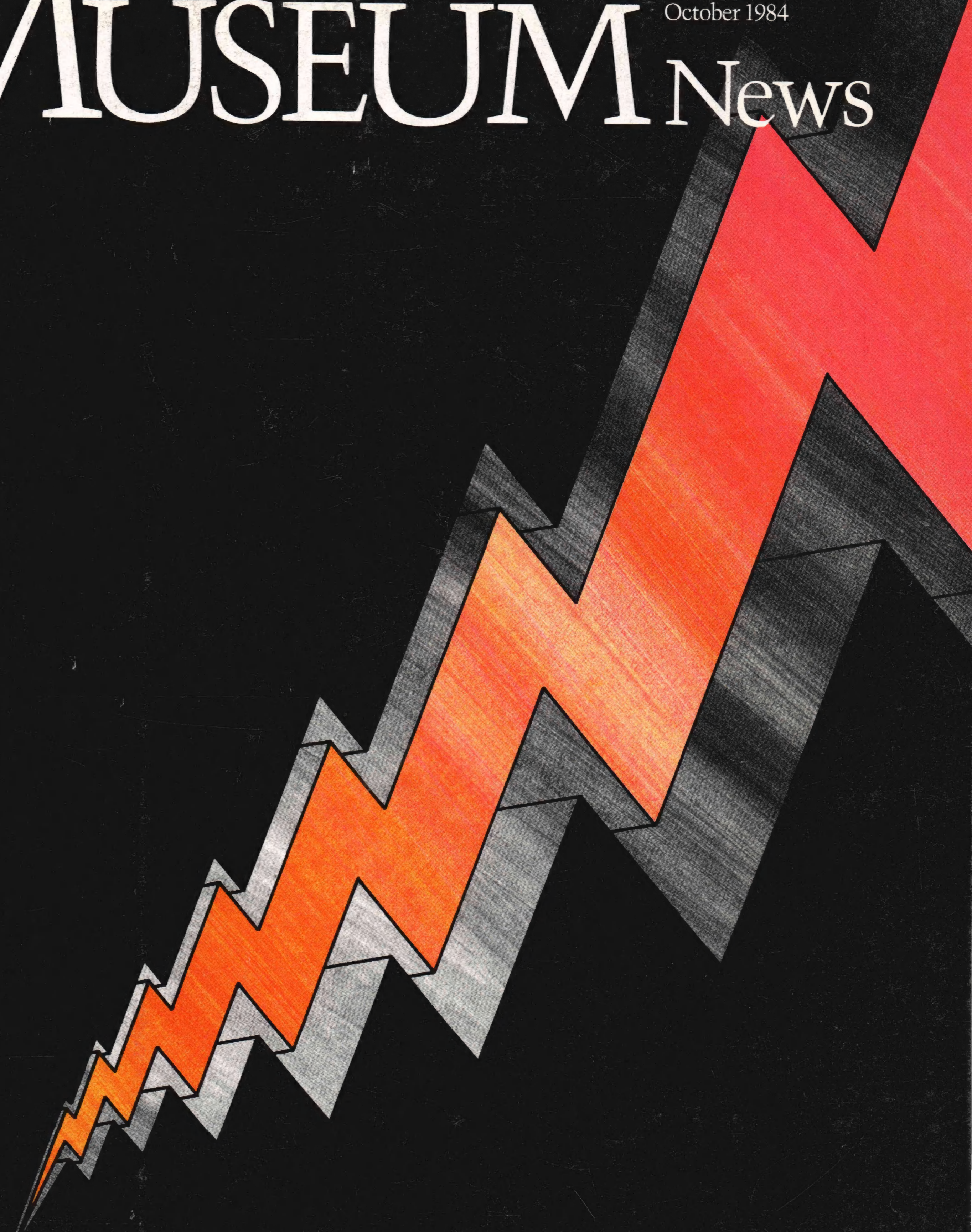
MUSEUM News

October 1984



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COVER
Lightning strikes. The museum and its public are split over an exhibition, an education program, research goals. Perhaps demonstrators parade outside the museum. Or, inside, the board and staff contend with one another over museum operations; or perhaps an exhibition itself depicts violence. This issue of MUSEUM NEWS examines museums and conflict: do museums present (or ignore) controversial subjects? should they? how? See the feature articles beginning on page 28.

ARTICLES

DEPARTMENTS

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

Museums for a New Century is now in print and beginning to stimulate discussion about the future of our nation's museums and those who work in and for them. The report is certain to have a great impact on the American Association of Museums itself, and, indeed, the work of the Commission on Museums for a New Century has already had a significant influence on the association. However, as I told those attending the 79th annual business meeting of the AAM last June, the work of the commission and its follow-up activities would not be possible if we did not have the strong, ongoing programs that have served the association well for many years.

I was reminded of this recently when preparing to meet with a representative from a foundation that provides the AAM with a generous grant for operating support. I thought about how I was going to report on our use of the funds, and, while I didn't exactly panic, I did begin to run through in my mind the specific, or special, activities on which we had been working during the last year. I asked several staff members what they thought about my emphasizing the new projects we had undertaken, and the reply was that I should say, instead, that the foundation's support was essential to virtually everything we did at the AAM, and most important to the quality of our work. When I had a little time to reflect, I realized that, in fact, this was exactly the right answer and that I was more of a captive of the "special projects" syndrome than I had realized.

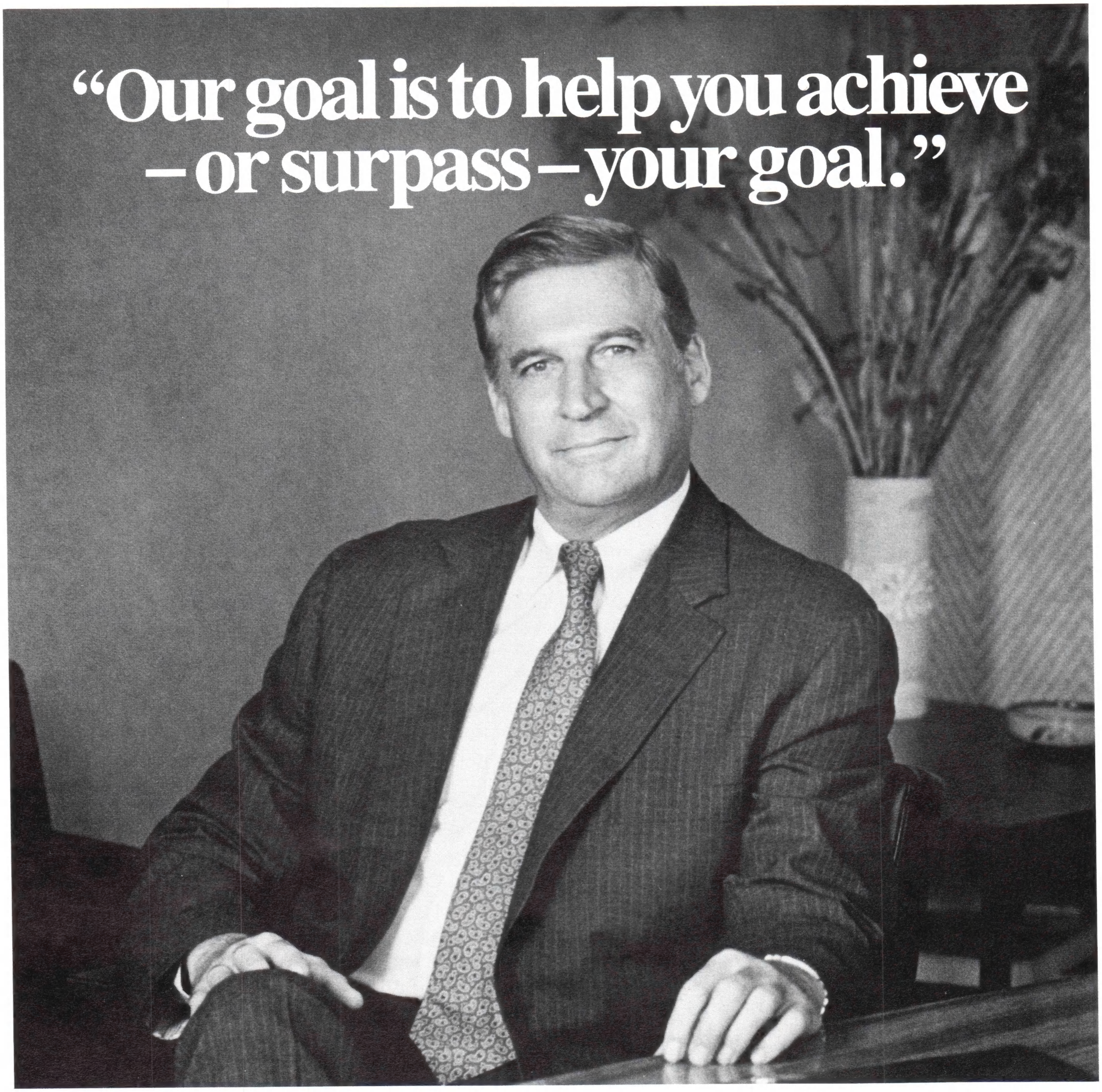
When I met with the foundation staff person the next morning I still had some sense of trepidation and concern about being so forthright. Not only did the representative understand, but she indicated that helping the association to provide the best possible services to the broadest segment of the museum community was exactly why the foundation was supporting us.

When we are asked to look back over a year it is tempting to highlight new and special activities rather than to celebrate those things that we have done all along, that are at the core of our purpose and ultimately serve as the basis for the new efforts we undertake. A later issue of MUSEUM NEWS will document the association's ongoing and special activities for fiscal year 1984. It is a record of which I believe our members and other supporters will be proud.

I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the importance of the staff of the association and my own personal gratitude for their devotion and dedication. Their commitment to professionalism and quality performance is of the highest order, and, perhaps more important, they care about the welfare of museums and all those who work on behalf of museums.

It is the opportunity to be associated with such an outstanding group of individuals that has served as the basis for my own continuing sense of professional satisfaction and fulfillment, as well as my optimism about the future for museums generally, and for the AAM specifically.

Lawrence L. Reger



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LETTERS

Required Reading

The April 1984 issue of MUSEUM NEWS is required reading, thanks in large measure to Paul Ganz's article on museum admission fees, "To Charge or Not to Charge, 1984." Not only did it address the philosophical issues cogently and with care, but it also offered even the casual reader a sense of what the future holds.

JENNIFER WEININGER
Director of Public Information
Worcester Art Museum
Worcester, Massachusetts

I just saw "Room at the Top" in the June 1984 issue of MUSEUM NEWS. What a thoughtful, timely and thought-provoking panel! I was very impressed with the concept, and had to smile at Kevan N. Moss' knocking over a brick wall. As a textile and costume restorer, and as a person who has renovated a house, I find that having the technical expertise really does make a difference and is, in fact, essential.

I commend Moss for her attitude, her "no-nonsense" approach and, in particular, for once again verbalizing the "inhibition that originates in a need to be approved or seen as always right." It's very true that this is a *modus operandi*, and, indeed, how much better to "just plain decide"!

HELENE VON ROSENSTIEL
President
Helene Von Rosenstiel, Inc.
Brooklyn, New York

What Is an Alteration?

"The Moral Rights of Artists: Museums and the Law" by Catherine Bostron, in the April 1984 issue, performs a valuable service in directing attention to important legislation that has already been enacted in two states and proposed in others. Much of the art world is unaware of these developments, which affect all museums, dealers and many others.

As a member of the New York bar and the husband of a painting conservator, I became involved in the New York legislation and a similar proposal in Connecticut, which was not adopted. I would like to offer a different perspective on this legislation.

These laws were justified by examples of mutilations of works of art. But the laws apply to "alterations," and their proponents refused to delete this coverage. What is an alteration, as opposed to a mutilation, covered by the act? The record at least in New York and Connecticut was silent. No evidence was presented concerning an alteration. In my opinion the use of this word makes the law vague and ambiguous, especially in the absence of any legislative history as to its intent. The further statutory requirement that "damage to the artist's reputation is reasonably likely to result" from the alteration does little to clarify the statute.

The problem is that this word brings conservation within the ambit of the statute, although this work is done to preserve a work of art, the very antithesis of mutilation. Any conservation treatment can be considered by its nature to be an "alteration" from the before-treatment condition. *But* the conservator would not have been consulted unless some deterioration or damage had occurred that required treatment to restore the artist's intent.

Bostron recognizes the coverage of conservation by devoting a great deal of space to it. Why is there this preoccupation with conservation? No evidence of conservation problems was presented to the New York legislature. Bostron states that there are no reported decisions on conservation negligence. She also correctly notes that conservators cannot obtain professional liability insurance. The reason for this is that there is no experience on which an underwriter can compute a premium.

All this would indicate that there is no significant problem with conservation requiring legal intervention. I believe that legislation should only be enacted to correct clearly identified problems, not theoretical needs.

The difficulty with this legislation is reflected in Bostron's statement: "Compliance with most aspects of the moral rights laws will present few problems for museum personnel, since they normally do not intentionally alter works of art or display art without crediting the artist." That sentence is incorrect, as indicated in the quotation on the same page [p. 48] from Ashton Hawkins, which accurately describes the key problems. He notes that disagreement on conservation technique could result in needless litigation.

The notion that conservators have nothing to fear if they are not negligent ignores the cost of litigation. As many, such as Derek Bok, president of Harvard University, have pointed out, there are no winners in litigation today. The costs of a successful trial are generally more than $10,000. That would be a disaster for a private conservator, who is invariably a small businessperson.

Obtaining consents to treatments from the artist is not a viable option. Except in the case of the most famous contemporary artists, a conservator treating a 20th-century work rarely knows whether the artist is alive or dead and if alive, how to reach him or her.

All those concerned with proper legislation in this area should seek to limit these laws to mutilations, which has always been the stated intent. And the laws in California and New York should be amended to limit their coverage to clearly identified problems.

EDWARD J. SACK
Brooklyn, New York

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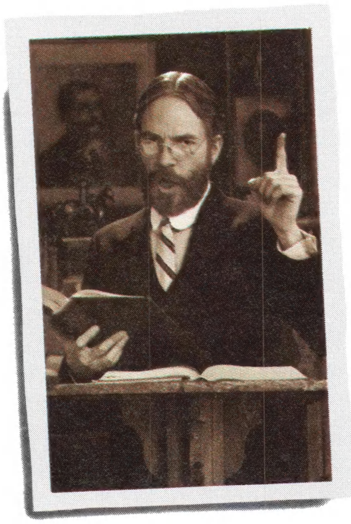
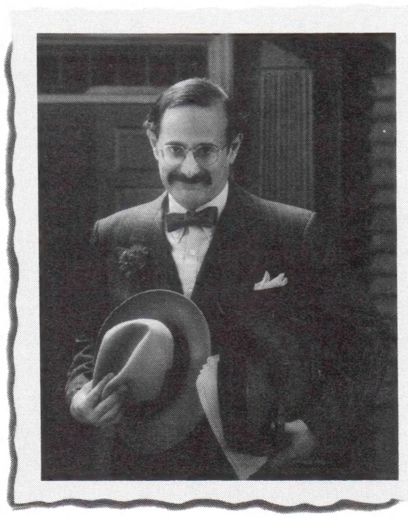
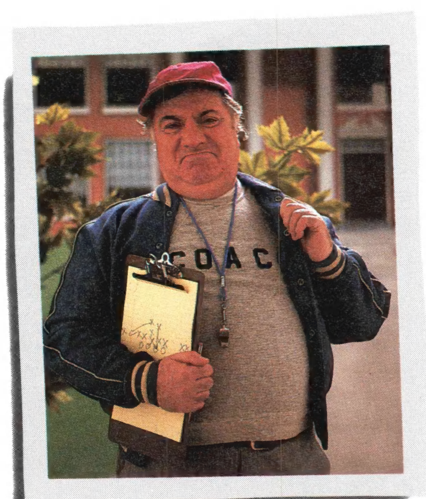


1918
Basic Retirement

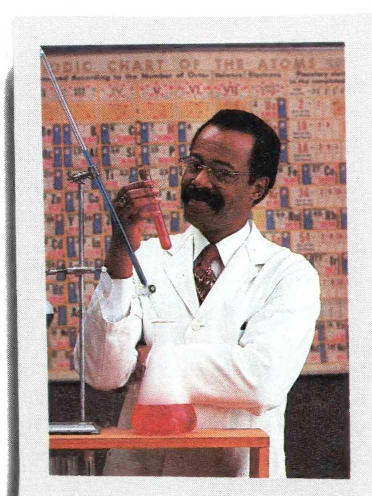


1932
Group Life

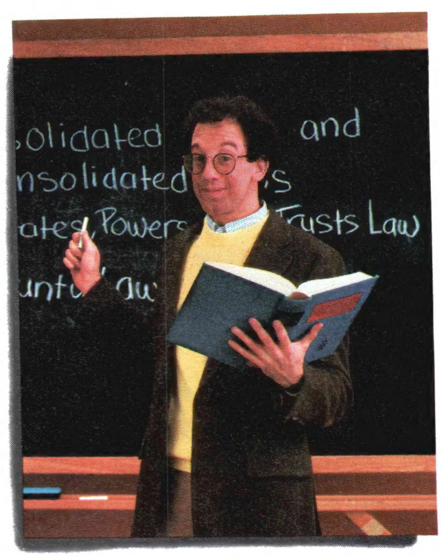
1956
Group Major Medical



1957
Comprehensive Total Disability



1973
Supplemental Retirement Annuities



1982
QVECs

COMMENTARY

Piaget in the Galleries

PEGGY COLE

I first came to appreciate the connection between child development and museum education in 1979, when I failed to use four precious tickets to the King Tut exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. I completely forgot about the exhibit and was sad when I realized I had missed it. I am an avid museum goer, and my sons had been looking forward to seeing mummies.

Happily, an advertisement in a local newspaper announced that the Wildcliff Museum (now defunct) was having a Tut exhibit for children. My sons, then 5 and 9, expressed great enthusiasm. Egyptology is dear to the hearts of children in their middle years, when concern with death and decay is at an all-time high.

The visit to Wildcliff was a revelation to me; and, in hindsight, that is surprising, since I was teaching child development at the time. I knew a great deal about development and something about museums, but I had never put these two worlds together before.

The moment we entered the museum the children were enthralled. We moved into a large orientation room alive with life-sized hieroglyphics telling the story of Isis and the creation of the world. There were masks of Egyptian gods for children to wear and a storyteller who prepared the children for the exhibit by asking them to participate in the story through masked pantomime. My sons became involved instantly. The paintings on the wall were done by local high school students and the museum staff

and were, because of their size and compelling color, available to children in a way no authentic hieroglyphics ever can be.

The children moved happily, and noisily, from one section of the exhibit to the next. They stopped at an Egyptian market and weighed the simulated foods with delight. The high point, of course, was Tut's tomb, and there it was in full splendor, complete with two rope pulleys. Hundreds of tiny hands lifted a paper-mache Tut from his tomb, and children squealed with delight at the idea that they, like the archeologist Howard Carter, who made the original discovery, had raised the dead.

We left Wildcliff enriched by the experience. My older son wanted to learn everything he could about mummification; the younger was taken with Isis and wanted to read more about Egyptian gods. My head was spinning—I had discovered the obvious. Being surrounded by authentic objects in a museum setting is a thrilling experience in itself. However, what children need in a museum, in addition to the awe inspired by the "real thing," is an opportunity to interact with an exhibit, a setting in which they can move freely and learn as children—exuberantly, actively, using all their senses. What came to mind was their childlike and spontaneous enthusiasm in zoos and aquariums, where it is permitted to make noise, ask questions, to observe with every sense.

While I regret missing the Tut show at the Met, I am grateful for the insights I gained. I have put them to good service ever since as my work has moved more and more into museum applications of learning theory.

Some years later, when I was working at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, I had a similar reminder of how children learn in museums, this one even more dramatic. In the main lobby of the museum is a large nude statue by Maillol. On this particular morning a group of inner-city boys was visiting the museum. I happened to be standing in the lobby when the group arrived, and the leader went off to make arrangements with the museum office. While they were waiting, the boys, ages ranging from 13 to 15, stood in a quiet group staring at the center stairway with the statue of Diana on high. As their eyes surveyed the spaces, one of them noticed the Maillol. Silently he moved off from the group and placed himself before this imposing female figure. As if compelled, his hands left his sides and slowly moved onto the statue. Beginning at her breasts he explored this torso from top to bottom. One of the other boys noticed what was happening and broke from the ranks of the group for his own tactile tour. A third was about to do the same when the group leader returned, and the children moved into line, their faces showing nothing of what had transpired the moments before.

Watching these pubescent youths explore the Maillol reminded me of developmental psychologist Jean Piaget's notion of interaction. His theory describes learning as an active exchange between

PEGGY COLE, an independent education consultant residing in New York, is on the graduate faculty of the Museum Leadership Program at Bank Street College of Education and the Museum Education Institute of Museums Collaborative. She is currently special projects coordinator for the Chrysler Museum in Norfolk, Virginia.

the learner and his environment. Each individual brings to new experiences the sum of all his experiences to date. He explores the world on the terms set by his stage of development, his past, his interests and his hypotheses. The world, in this case the Maillol statue, is there in different ways for each of us. This exchange between what's inside the learner and what's outside in the world results in a highly individual experience. Because I am a woman, familiar with sculpture as a mode, acclimated to female nudity, at ease in museums, I come to the Maillol on terms markedly different from those of an adolescent inner-city child. For such a youngster the Maillol statue may be many things: an affirmation of theories about female bodies, an insight into what can happen to a hard material in the hands of an artist, an explanation for what museums house. What was visible to me as an observer was the intensity of the experience for these boys. What remains unknown is the meaning of the experience for the individual learner.

Of all museum audiences, the one that is most reliable, most predictable and most demanding is the elementary school group. I think of young schoolchildren as a captive audience—they are there by edict whether they like it or not, and museum educators have to deal with them. Every curator of education is concerned with the mechanics of booking school groups, timing tours to accommodate bus and class schedules, communicating with teachers, helping docents make museum visits meaningful and enjoyable for these young charges.

While many museum educators are trained in an area of expertise — archeology, natural history, art history, anthropology — few have a background in child development. Without this training they are rightly concerned about directing docents and programming tours for school groups. In response to this need, Museums Collaborative held the first Museum Education Institute in 1983 in Harriman, New York. I was a faculty member, and it was no surprise to hear experienced education directors

express relief and new-found insight when an aspect of child development theory helped them understand why their young visitors behaved as they did.

One of the more delightful anecdotes I heard that week came from an amused professional who led a group of kindergartners through a gallery of nudes. One little girl expressed amazement and commented, "Look, they're not wearing any socks!"

Each museum setting makes different demands on children. Historical reconstructions ask young children to deal with concepts of time. Piaget has documented the fact that such understandings build slowly as children extend their notions of long ago through their direct lifetime experiences. That is why, to a 5-year-old, anyone over 20 is "old." It is common for young children to fuse aspects of the present with the past. One 8-year-old thought the food preserved on Columbus' voyage was hung over the sides of the boat in Baggies. Science and natural history museums ask children to deal with notions of origins and processes — how things work, where things begin. Art museums require some understanding of esthetics, coupled with a knowledge of history and biography. Many mothers of 5-to-7-year-old girls report that their daughters wish they would dress in rhinestones, taffeta, very high heels and lots of eye makeup (preferably green). Such parents should take heart in the knowledge that their children don't have bad taste. What they have is "children's taste," a developmental stage where the most visually obvious aspects of dress are accessible and the more subtle components are waiting for their attention at a later stage of development.

Museums are moving toward broader audiences, and the proliferation of specialized programs and specialized museums within the past decade indicates that this is the wave of the future. Wildcliff was part of the experimentation with children's museums. As of this writing, there are a number of children's museums in major cities that have taken their place among art, science and natural history museums. The Boston Children's Museum, the Capital Children's Museum, the Indianapolis Children's Museum, the Pittsburgh Children's Museum and the Staten Island Children's Museum are some that focus on young audiences.

Since most museum educators work with children in specialized settings like children's museums, they must translate developmental notions into meaningful programs for children within their galleries. What are some themes from child development that help us understand the way elementary school children experience museums?

A key understanding for museum educators is the learning style of school-age children. Their learning mode is far more intense than that of adults. They learn through action and interaction, actively exploring their world as they gather information through their senses, all of them. I still recall, with some nostalgia, the days when my own sons learned about the properties of soy sauce, water, sugar and mustard as they conducted intense experiments in Chinese restaurants while waiting for the food to come. The most frequently used sense in support of scientific investigation for people under 8 is touch; and that, in the main, is what

you cannot do in galleries. Many museum educators have found ingenious ways to help children with this learning style. A child may not be able to touch a statue or an object or a painting, but he can be provided with handling materials so that he can have, in hand, examples of objects to explore, to discuss, to hold. There are many gallery activities that direct children toward objects and ideas in an active mode—treasure hunts, role-playing activities, "hands-on" experiences.

Schoolchildren are egocentric; they measure all new experiences by their own, and they generalize about the world from what they know of a small part of it. When my older son was 5 and saw the Statue of Liberty for the first time, he announced, "Look, the lady is standing there waiting for me." Children can become engaged during a museum visit if they are asked about their ideas, their experiences, their opinions. They love to tell about their favorite possessions, their recent excursions. Asking personal questions is a good way to involve children with collections and to learn how they view the world.

Unlike adults, children do not learn much from the symbolic world of words and numbers. They are drawn to real things, moving exhibits, bright lights, dioramas, animals, costumed people. They rarely read signs (there are some exceptions of course), and it is unwise to depend on written symbols to communicate with elementary school children. Most know how to read by third grade, but they have more active ways of gathering information: asking questions, touching things, comparing what they see with their own experiences.

Elementary school children are only beginning to understand cause-and-effect relationships and transformations (changes over time). Such abstract notions are still likely to confuse them, especially when they are presented with only the finished product. They will want to know the answers to such questions as, Why is the object in a museum? Who made it? What was it made from? How was it made? How was it used? When was it used?

If a child sees a hand-carved stool, he must be able to reconstruct a number of steps to understand how that stool was made: how a tree was felled, how the piece of wood from the tree was separated from the rest of the trunk, what tools were used in the carving, how long it took, what the stool looked like at different stages, why it wasn't bought in a store. Presented with the finished product, many children simply assume the stool came that way. Youngsters who may be able to tell you that the stool was hand-carved may not really understand what is involved in such a process. Adults generally view an object within a context despite the fact that it is displayed in isolation. Children cannot do this. When working with school groups, it is wise to take nothing for granted. It's a good idea to discuss steps in a process with children, to have photographs of these steps in the galleries. If you are

discussing an object from another culture, help the children understand what that culture was like. Poems, legends, pictures and films are all ways to provide the necessary cultural context for viewing objects.

Grouping things is a major intellectual activity for this age group. Children enjoy and learn from classification activities. Any gallery activity that asks them to observe and then group is powerful. Children might be asked, for example, to find all the objects in a room made of wood or by machine, used by children, all the animals with sharp teeth, two legs and so on. Classification activities can be presented on many levels of difficulty, from grouping by color or shape to grouping by origin or purpose. Grouping helps all museum visitors to observe more carefully.

Children love to talk and are concerned with pleasing adults. After their initial shyness they are delighted to tell everything they know about any subject (relevant to the exhibit or not). It's a good idea to design experiences that encourage discussion and put the child in the position of sharing his knowledge with others. If children are asked a question they can't answer, they feel they have failed the adult. On the other hand, if they are asked open-ended questions that they can answer, children feel powerful and enthusiastic. Some sample questions one might ask include (in relation to objects such as knives): What do you use in your home for cutting things? How do the tools you use compare with this one? What would you do with this object if you could have it? What do you think this is made of? Museum educators must be prepared for "incorrect" or partial answers, as young children work out their ideas. The children must be given support, direction and respect, so they have no fear of trying out an idea.

Children are anxious to grow up, and they are vulnerable because they are small and dependent. Bravado in fifth- and sixth-graders often covers up deep feelings of helplessness. One teacher I know was amazed when her "sophisticated, inner-city" 12-year-olds burst into tears at a New York City subway toll booth because the person behind the booth refused to honor their train pass on a bureaucratic technicality. Those children were frightened that they might not get home.

Museum visits are most successful when children know something about the content in advance. They feel powerful when they can show their knowledge to adults. That is why elementary school children are such serious students of the names of prehistoric animals. They memorize multisyllabic words with gusto and recite them with pride. They feel a sense of power when they can name things scientifically — the bigger the word, the better. The reverse is equally true. Children feel uncomfortable when they have no handle on a new experience, and when they feel helpless they often act out in the galleries, getting silly, shouting and disobeying rules. It is useful to find out how well the teacher has prepared the group for the visit. Previsit materials are a great help, and sending the teacher a simple packet with reproductions of objects in the galleries goes a long way toward reducing this vulnerability.

Children are more concerned with their peers than they are with adults.

COMMENTARY

This phenomenon begins at about age 7 and crescendos in adolescence — the older the group the more intense the concern. Some museum educators report that children walk into the gallery and are unnerved when they are grouped for activities. Sometimes this upset is the result of sitting next to the wrong person on the bus or being separated from one's best friend. It is wise to let the classroom teacher create groupings for gallery activities. The teacher knows the peer relationships and can use them to advantage. At the Columbia Museum of Arts and Sciences in Columbia, South Carolina, a peer docent program takes advantage of this developmental phenomenon. Junior-high-school docents conduct tours for elementary age children.

As children get older, they become less visibly enthusiastic. A 5-year-old will express overt delight and amazement at a new discovery. By 13 or 14 few children will admit such discoveries publicly. If they tell you an experience was "all right," it means it was wonderful. After all, if they are so sophisticated that they've seen it all, anything less than a cool response would reveal the underlying truth of their naïveté. It helps to remember this when you've prepared a thoughtful and, in your opinion, successful lesson for a group of seemingly blasé youngsters. Watch their actions, not their words. Any upper elementary school teacher will tell you that "okay" means something was really special.

The interests of elementary school children are concrete, and often discrete. Explanations of how things work, what happens when you die, who has power, what's inside things, what were the lives of children like in different times and cultures should be used in programming. Other topics that enrapture this age group include magic, ritual, monsters, living things (especially animals, the bigger the better), knights, dinosaurs, ancient Egypt, bats, sharks, whales, outer space, the future, indigenous peoples, secret codes, pirates and people conquering adversities like poverty, physical handicaps, nature and difficult family situations.

Children are concerned with authority. They need to know who is in charge and what is expected of them. Often, when school groups visit museums, authority is not clear. Unless the museum education department and the teacher have worked out their roles in advance, it is possible to send double signals to children, or worse yet, none at all. The children know their teacher well. She is the person who sets expectations and offers rewards every single day. The docent, on the other hand, is a stranger, and they may not know whether to take directions (verbal or nonverbal) from their teacher or a stranger. Experience has shown that one way to assure a successful museum visit is to contact the teacher in advance and discuss who will be in charge. The clearer the children are about who that person is, the less anxious they will be. Knowing the name of a docent helps the children a great deal, as does having their name known by the museum educator. Children may make name tags to wear when they visit the museum.

Where do I go if I'm lost? Where's the bathroom? What happens if I get locked in the museum? Where is my lunch? Will we miss the bus? Do we get to buy souvenirs? What time do we go home? Children worry about the mechanics of life. The more these kinds of issues are addressed in advance, the better the museum visit will be. Children need assurance that adults have thought of these problems and have solutions to them. It's a good idea to greet school groups in a neutral space before entering the galleries. There such topics can be discussed, and children can be told exactly what to expect without the stimulation of the exhibit competing for their attention.

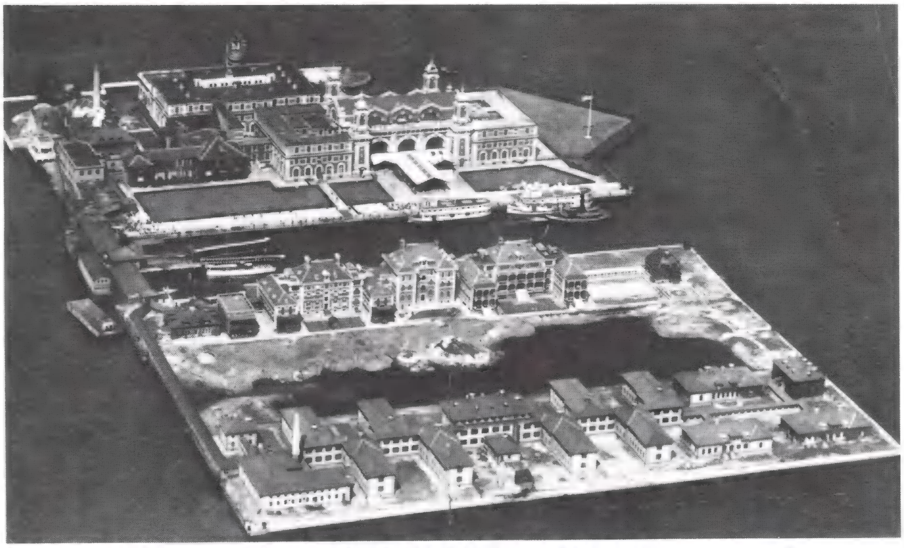
In sum, there is much about child development that museum educators need to know in order to plan successful school tours. There is a need for training in child development by museum professionals, just as there is a need for classroom teachers to learn how to use museums. Classroom teachers and museum educators need to talk to one another, both formally and informally. Each has a wealth of information the other needs. Once youngsters enter the galleries, this information must be put to use. Successful museum visits for elementary school children depend on how sensitive and aware the teacher and the museum educator are of what children are like and how they learn in museums. Δ

Inventorying a Historic Property

JUDITH A. BRUNDIN

In recent years, bequests of collections to historical societies have grown in number. When a small or volunteer organization is suddenly faced with the necessity of bringing a large and diverse collection of objects under some kind of informational control, such gifts may seem a mixed blessing. No task appeared more overwhelming than the inventorying of as many historically significant objects as possible on Ellis Island, the abandoned immigrant processing center in New York Harbor, in just two months. Two summers ago five graduate students from the Museum Studies Program at New York University, under the direction of Flora S. Kaplan, were assigned that task. The methodology they developed grew out of the special conditions they faced,[1] but it has applications for similar inventories of large, uncategorized collections of objects that may "bless" museums of all sizes and kinds throughout the country.

The broad goal of the inventory was to assess the scope, quantity and quality of the possible collection specimens within the time period allotted the project. The fact that very few objects had been numbered before presented a rare opportunity for members of the inventory team. They had the benefit of studying the systems of the past and the knowledge that their system might be computerized. What resulted was an inventory system that, while serving Ellis Island's particular collection needs, might also have implications for a variety of different museums. The system provides an analysis of a group of objects, by numbers and categories, that is ready for computerization. It enabled the small team to inventory a great variety and quantity of objects in a short period of time and to prepare a descriptive analysis of the collection.



Taken in 1921, this photograph of Ellis Island shows the immigrant processing center in its heyday. Since then the center has been abandoned, and considerable foliage and land fill have altered the island's neat appearance.

Ellis Island was the chief immigrant processing center operated by the federal government from 1892 to 1954,[2] and accounts estimate that one in two Americans have relatives who were processed through the facility. In 1954 immigrant processing was moved to Manhattan, and Ellis Island was abandoned. Eleven years later Ellis Island was designated a National Monument, and in 1975 the National Park Service began surveillance of the buildings. Currently the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Centennial Foundation is raising funds for the stabilization, preservation and restoration of several structures associated with the early period of immigrant processing. The beginning phase of the renovation included the inventory in 1982, which was administered through a contract by the National Park Service. Renovation plans are scheduled for completion in 1992, in time for Ellis Island's centennial celebration. When work is completed, the exhibits in the Main Building will include the steep staircase the immigrants first climbed, the Great Hall where they were processed, and office and medical examination areas.

Out of a total of 35 buildings on the island, the Main Building is the earliest standing structure and was the focus of

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the inventory. With three floors and a full-sized basement, the building has more than 200 rooms, some very large and others quite small. Some rooms contain hundreds of possible collection objects, while others have few or none at all. Because of the serious deterioration of many of the rooms and objects, members of the inventory team dressed for the occasion. They donned hard hats, heavy boots and leather gloves and wore noxious gas masks in certain hazardous areas.

The objects in the rooms reflect the workings of the federal government for a period of 62 years. There are furnishings acquired on the open market in the early 20th century and manufactured items from the General Services Administration (GSA) catalogs of the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. The furnishings include kitchen utensils, clothing, baggage, medical equipment and supplies, old bottles, furniture and paper documents. A small group of objects of possible historical value had been tagged a few years earlier, but the inventory team found the tags illegible and decided to do the inventory from scratch.

Inventory team members donned hard hats for work in structures that had been vacant for more than 25 years.

From the beginning two things were clear. First, a complete inventory was not possible within six weeks, the first week of the two-month period being allocated to developing forms and the final week to writing the report. Second, some of the manufactured objects were in pieces and unrecognizable; these would probably not be a part of the museum collection. In a sense, the inventory team acted as archeologists at a site, searching through debris to discover treasures and possible collection objects.

Before beginning the project, the inventory team consulted available literature on inventory methods and found there was very little applicable to the Ellis Island situation. In *Museum Registration Methods,* Diane Greene Taylor defines the goal of a museum inventory as "to obtain a dated list of objects by location and by identifying number." She also describes the inventory list as "helping to assess just how well documented a collection may be" and giving the museum staff "a good overview of the variety of objects in the collection."[3] The Ellis Island team felt that, for its inventory, as much information as possible should be collected about the objects, and categories and subcategories should be established. The objects were, in a sense, "pristine"; no former records on them existed. Here the team found Robert Chenhall's advice applicable: "Any documentation of the objects in a collection must be cross-indexed as many ways as possible or the information contained in the records will not be useable."[4] Chenhall

Inventory team members found documents scattered with years of accumulated debris.

was referring to complex registration and cataloging procedures, but his point is well taken with inventory methods. As long as the efficiency and accuracy of the inventory are not compromised, gathering as much information as possible through categorizing objects facilitates final tabulations, the selection of objects for the collection and future computerization.

Thus the inventory team decided first to gather quantitative and descriptive information on groups of identical (manufactured or mass-produced) objects and second to compile descriptive information on one-of-a-kind objects. The team was also concerned with the location and general condition of all possible collection objects.

Team members faced four major challenges: 1) deciding which objects should be inventoried and why; 2) determining what information was most important and to be recorded about each object or group of identical objects; 3) formulating an inventory system that had flexible components; and 4) accomplishing all this with great speed.

The project raised some interesting questions regarding collection management of a historic site of the recent

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past. The inventory team unanimously agreed that all historical periods should be represented in the collection. Ellis Island had been an immigrant processing station from 1892 until it was abandoned. It had also served as a detention facility, a Public Health Service hospital and finally a Coast Guard station. Team members decided to inventory all historical objects in "reasonable condition" that were not attached to the walls, ceilings or floors. This included architectural elements that could be used in reconstructing a room or period area, as well as objects for exhibition areas. "Reasonable condition" was defined as being intact and recognizable, with historical or exhibit value. Team members read historical literature on Ellis Island and surveyed GSA catalogs to familiarize themselves with objects of possible historic significance.

The information considered most important about each object was: 1) the object's name; 2) the identification or reference number assigned by the team; 3) the object's location at the time of the inventory; 4) the inventory date; 5) a

Sample Inventory Card

Written in red ink on the original cards.

FRONT

Ellis Island Inventory

V·B·4

Identification Number

110

Room Number

Prototype

Number indicates the *final* count after the room inventory is completed.

Object: 2 Chairs

Number indicates a running tabulation conducted while inventorying this particular item.

Present Location: 1st floor - West Wing

Room; location within the building.

Cataloger: J. Hellman

Date of Inventory: 8-13-82

2

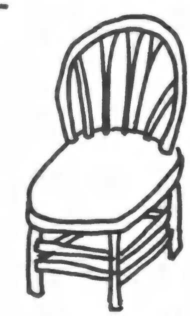

Photo or Sketch

BACK

Description: Wooden chairs, with 5 supporting poles on the back. Between each pair of legs are two rungs (also wooden). Remnants of green paint still remain. 1 chair is in poor condition, the other is in exhibitable condition

Materials: Wood

Measurements in Centimeters: 87 x 48

Patent Number or Distinguishing Marks: None

brief description of the object and its condition; 6) a general description of the materials that constituted the object, such as "wood" or "metal"; and 7) the object's measurements, including height, width and depth in centimeters. (See sample inventory card, left.)

The system had to be flexible to allow for the great variety of objects the team suspected were in the buildings. It also had to be clear enough to serve other inventory teams in the future, as the National Monument's museum staff is currently too small to handle the Ellis Island collection. Finally, the system had to be time-efficient, as the inventory had to be completed in just six weeks.

The Ellis Island team was not concerned with permanent identification, as artifacts would not be selected for the collection until a later date. But they had to move quickly, attaching and recording temporary reference numbers. Diane Taylor suggests that for inventorying historic objects that have never been numbered before, a prefix and a simple number be used, such as A-1, A-2, A-3, etc.[5] The inventory team decided that a two-part system might designate a common name and a particular style or type number (e.g., chair—style #1). A three-part system, however, would give additional flexibility, as it would allow designating a general category, a common name and a particular style or type number (e.g., furniture—chair—style #1). A four-part system would have allowed each specimen to be assigned its own individual number, separate and distinct from any other object in the collection (e.g., furniture—chair—style #1—item #1), but the assignment of unique numbers seemed more like a registration or cataloging procedure than an inventory, and it would not be time-efficient. Team members chose the three-part system because they suspected it would serve their purposes. The three-part system was represented by a roman numeral, then a capital letter and finally an arabic numeral. For example, a particular chair was first designated as a piece of furniture (V), second as a chair (B) and finally as a specific style or type of chair (#4). The chair was then given an identification reference number (hereafter referred to as IRN) V-B-4.

The inventory began with each team member walking through the Main Building and organizing a list of possible

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general categories and common names for the objects. These lists provided a category outline with which the team structured the IRN system. Throughout the inventory, communication among team members about descriptive terms for categories and the identification of objects was essential. Team members stayed in close proximity to each other; they shared information about "new" finds and consulted each other regularly about category terminology. After they established working general categories, the inventory rapidly picked up speed.

Electrical floor plans with designated room numbers were provided by the National Park Service, and these numbers were used throughout the inventory to number rooms and identify object locations on inventory tags. Two types of string tags were attached to objects — 1-inch circular tags and 2-by-3-inch rectangular tags. Team members tried to attach a tag to every inventoried object, but this was not always possible or, in some cases, necessary. Some objects were located beneath, below or inside others; some were very heavy. Piles of bed frames and springs, for example, were in great abundance, all in similar condition. In such cases tags were attached to every few objects, and the number of these identical objects, their condition and descriptive information were recorded on the inventory card. The tags included the IRN on one side and the room location on the other. (See sample inventory tag, right.) Inventory cards were printed on both sides of 3-by-5-inch card stock paper.

Upon entering a new room, the inventory team member first painted the electrical floor plan room number on the door frame with white paint. The number was serviceable but temporary and could be removed at a future date. The team member next decided which object to inventory first and what its general category and common name were. The next step was to consult the master in-

Sample Inventory Tag

Front
Identification number of inventoried object.

Back
Room where the object was discovered and located at the time of the inventory.

ventory card file, which team members took with them wherever they went, to find out if the object was identical to any already inventoried in other rooms. If the object was mass-produced and already identified on another card, the same IRN was used. If it was not, the team member assigned it a new IRN and filled out a new inventory card on it, including approximate measurements in centimeters, a written description noting identifying marks or insignias and a sketch or color Instamatic photograph. The team member then surveyed the room to determine if it contained additional identical objects. The number of identical objects was indicated on each card by slash marks or by a number in the upper left-hand corner of the sketch or photo section of the inventory card. To assist future teams in selecting objects for the final collection, identical objects were distinguished by condition reports, but not in other details. Words such as "poor," "fair," "good" and "excellent" were used.

The system had important flexible components, and in addition to specific categories, the term "miscellaneous" was applied to objects that did not fall into categories. Examples included recreational weaving looms, Chinese checkerboards and napkin holders. As the term "miscellaneous" could be used as the first, second or third part of the IRN, it solved most of the problems of placing objects in categories.

The use of the general or roman numeral category greatly reduced search time. Rather than looking through a listing of hundreds of common names that might have been needed in a two-part system, team members could consult broad categories. The broad category "furniture" made common names such as "chair" and "table" much easier to locate. The three-part system also made possible a cross-referencing index for the future computerization of the inventory and data about the objects.

Each team member had a list of the master inventory card file including roman numeral and capital letter categories. These were determined by the inventory team as a whole; specific style or arabic numeral categories were assigned by individual team members. The system was rapid because categories were decided on as objects were located. As in other efforts, group communication was very important.

Thus the descriptive category system evolved as the project progressed. About midway through the inventory, team members realized that the categories they had established were repeating themselves and only a few new ones were necessary. This meant that the categories were functional and accurately represented the collection. Thereafter, the objects were assessed and counted with greater speed.

Then, about three-quarters of the way through the inventory, the team stopped to discuss category problems because some categories had become obsolete and a few new ones were needed. For example, an IRN (VI-A-1) was designated for an object the team had thought was a "boat part." After further investigation, it was discovered that the object was a helicopter part, and no boat parts were found. In addition, some paper documents were found that had not been assigned an IRN. So the IRN for the "boat part" was assigned to the paper documents. The helicopter part was cor-

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rectly tagged in the miscellaneous category already established. In this way the team revised the system and prevented gaps in it. A few days toward the end of the project were spent adjusting category terminology and object tags.

In only six weeks the team managed to inventory and categorize 8,612 objects, 252 rooms and two buildings. After finishing the Main Building, the team had had time to move on to the Kitchen and Laundry Building, and the inventory was far more thorough than expected.

The last week of the two-month contract was spent assembling the final report. It contained an explanation of the inventory methodology, object category tables and total numbers of objects, suggestions for future inventories, maps of the buildings, a sample inventory card and tag and a selected, annotated bibliography. The use of inventory cards, which could be sorted and resorted into various piles, made assembling the data easy.

The first three tables conveyed data about the three-part IRN system. The first table listed general or roman numeral categories and total numbers (or "type totals") of objects, for example:[6]

		Number of Objects
I.	Tableware	2,989
II.	Kitchen Utensils	1,442
III.	Machine Parts	19

The second table listed common name or capital letter categories, for example:

I. Tableware

A.	Saucers	1,315
B.	Plates	691
C.	Bowls	942

The third table listed specific types or styles of objects by arabic numeral categories, for example:

I. Tableware

A. Saucers

1.	Albert Pick, green stripe	31
2.	Albert Pick, plain	13
3.	Bailey Walker, flat edge	36

The fourth table listed objects by location and room number and included full IRNs. It was the longest and most complex of all the tables.

First Floor, Main Building

Room 101
3 chairs (V-B-1, 20, 21), 2 fans (X-B-2), 1 lamp, architectural (XI-D-6).

Room 102
1 file cabinet (V-C-11), 1 table (V-D-11), 1 fire extinguisher (VII-A-22), 1 chalkboard (XIII-B-2).

Hall 102
16 chairs (V-B-22), 1 cabinet (V-C-33).

The fifth table listed objects of possible early historical significance, for example:

I. Tableware

A. Saucers

		Number of Objects
12.	Greenwood China Co.	12
26.	"U.S. Army Medical Department"	17
30.	Trenle China	9
38.	Pittsburgh Athletic Association MCMVIII	1

The inventory reference system was modern in the sense that it established "searchable fields"[7] and included as a priority an analysis of objects by name, categories and location that could be used to establish a cross-referenced index. The system also provided a rapid analysis of descriptive information about the objects that might be selected for the collection.

An inventory team is often faced with trying to organize, for computerization, an outdated and incomplete bookkeeping system that was developed long ago. It is possible that the three-part IRN system could be used to assess the collection quickly in terms of numbers and categories of objects in preparation for an object-by-object inventory. As a temporary method it provides broad, cross-referenced, descriptive data that might keep the collection management team from being overwhelmed by the task of a general inventory. At a later date the system might also be expanded to include a fourth number unique to each object in the collection that would identify objects in a permanent way.

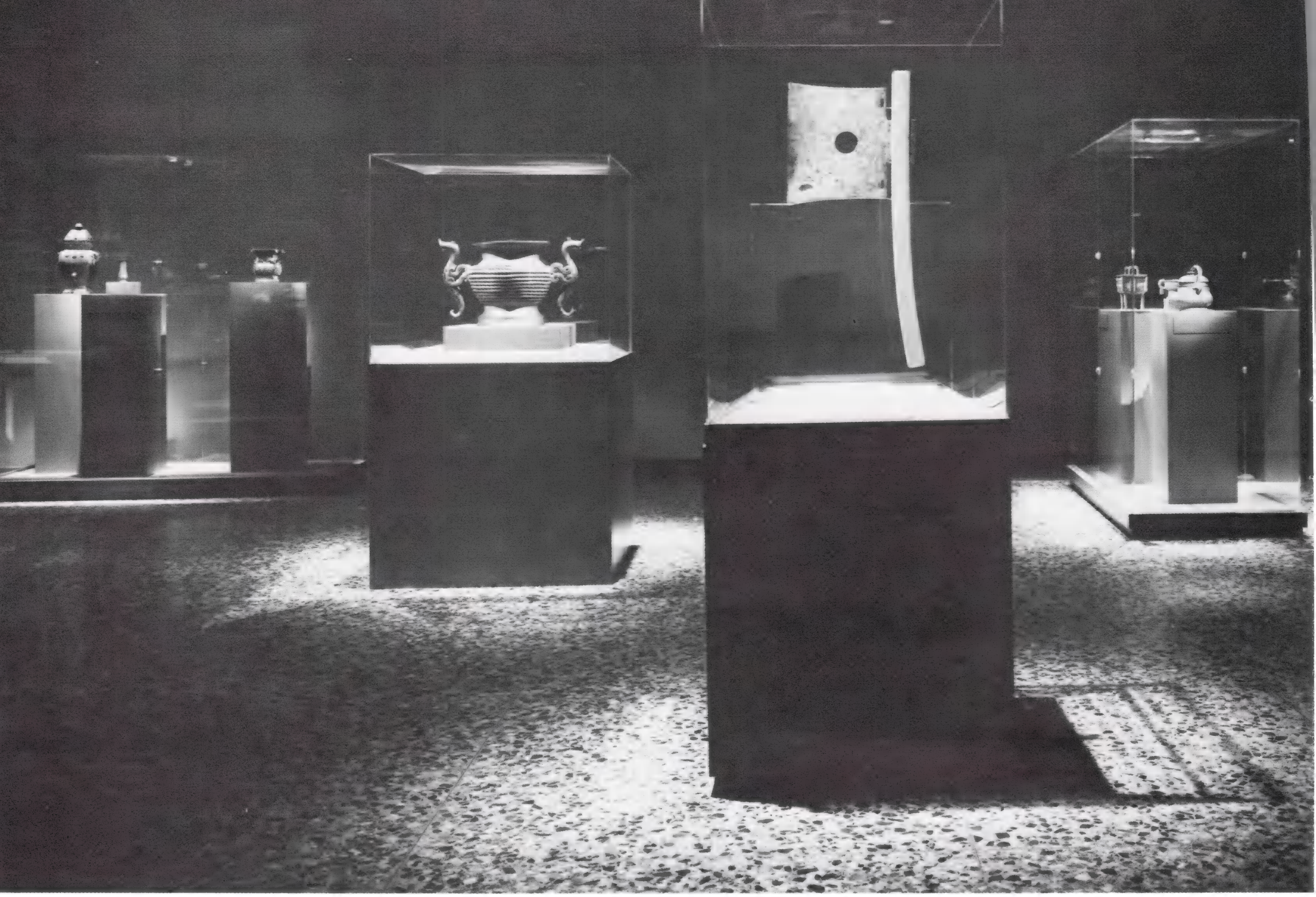
There are as many ways to conduct a museum inventory as there are collec-

tions problems and concerns. In 1980, Francine Flynn, registrar at the Arizona Historical Society, surveyed procedures used to inventory collections in the western United States, and, by her account, no museums were working with a three-part category method.[8] The method developed at Ellis Island is flexible and adaptable. While it does not dictate any particular use for the categories and does not address concerns like object values and insurance, it provides a rapid overview of the scope of a collection in terms of categories and numbers of objects. It's a shoe that can be tailor-made to fit. Δ

Notes

Members of the inventory team included Patra Cogan, Jill Hellman, Toby Herbst, Diane Zorich and the author, under the direction of Flora S. Kaplan, director of the Museum Studies Program at New York University. The author acknowledges them and the National Park Service staff, including Edward Kallop, Jr., and Paul Kinney, for their assistance.

1. Ellis Island Report, New York University, Museum Studies Program, Flora S. Kaplan, Project Director, October 15, 1982, contract no. OM, order no. PX 1600-2-0485.
2. Thomas M. Pitkin, *Keepers of the Gate: A History of Ellis Island* (New York: New York University Press, 1975), pp. 13, 29.
3. Diane Greene Taylor, "Registration in a Historic House Museum," in Dorothy H. Dudley, Irma Bezold Wilkinson, and others, *Museum Registration Methods*, 3d ed. (Washington, D.C.: American Association of Museums, 1979), pp. 262, 264.
4. Robert G. Chenhall, *Museum Cataloging in the Computer Age* (Nashville, Tenn.: American Association for State and Local History, 1975), p. 9.
5. Taylor, "Registration in a Historic House Museum," p. 262.
6. Examples of descriptive category terminology and object totals are from the Ellis Island Report, pp. 5, 6, 8, 24, 49.
7. Alex F. Riccardelli, "A Model for Inventorying Ethnological Collections," *Curator* 10, no. 4 (1967): 332.
8. Francine Flynn, telephone conversation with author, May 11, 1984.



EDITOR'S NOTES

Volume 63, Number 1

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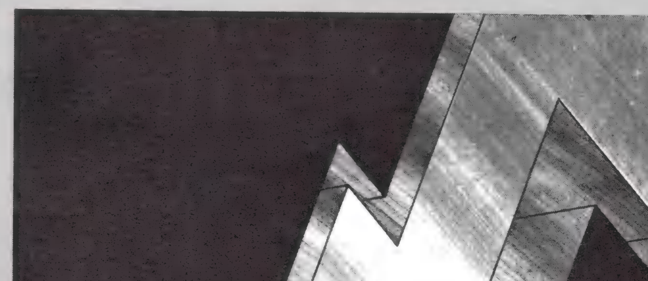
Contemporary art is always the subject of controversy, by someone's definition, from Manet's once-shocking *Déjeuner sur l'herbe* to Gilbert and George's photopieces. So is the harsh realism of first-person interpretation at a historic site or the shocking images of death in an exhibition about nuclear warfare. One view of museums holds that they are intellectually neutral and independent institutions, but practical experience shows that isn't always so. Historian Neil Harris says museums have never been totally free from controversy as they collide with issues of contemporary concern. Showing conflict or controversy, while not intellectually neutral, can simply be considered part of a museum's obligation to educate.

So Thomas Nicholson, Brenda Richardson and Thomas Schlereth tell us in this issue of MUSEUM NEWS, which focuses on the dilemma of controversy and conflict and the ways museums choose—or choose not—to deal with them in their exhibitions and programs. All three articles have a common thread: the relationship of controversy to innovation. When a museum sidesteps an issue or rejects an idea because of its potentially controversial nature, innovation may be thwarted. The new idea, the unresolved issue, the unpopular point of view may not be truly controversial but simply unfamiliar and untested. The risk of innovation—and the risk of addressing controversy—is well worth taking. Without it, a museum's position in the vanguard of its field, whether art, science or history, is in jeopardy, and one of its most important commitments—to challenge the minds of its visitors—is neglected.

One museum not afraid to take risks or challenge its visitors is the Boston Children's Museum. Just as we finished planning this issue, we learned about its new exhibition called *Death and Loss,* a striking example of a museum's decision to deal openly with a reality from which children are usually protected. "We thought it should be done," Janet Kamien of the museum told the *New York Times,* so the staff set out to show children and their parents that "dying isn't a vacation. It's not like going to visit your grandmother. You don't come back again." It took six years to plan this frank and compelling show, which has stimulated some strong responses from the public. But, Kamien says, "we have a commitment to children, to make life less threatening to them."

Other museums have a similar commitment—to stimulate their visitors to think, remember, make choices, understand. That can't be done without taking risks. Brenda Richardson puts it well: "We should be in the business of moving people, of touching them. . . . If we consistently scheduled exhibitions that were easy, probably pleasurable to most people, but lacking what I consider to be moral and esthetic content, then I would feel I was betraying the public's trust."



Ellen Cochran Hicks

More Damn Trouble

Museums and Controversy

Thomas D. Nicholson

Very often, in describing the resources and the scale of operations at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, I draw the comparison to a Boeing 747 aircraft. As museums go, the American Museum of Natural History is fairly big, by any yardstick imaginable. But it is probably comparable, as a pure business venture, to the operation of just one 747 aircraft for one or two months. The thought helps bring me down to earth when I may be floating too high.

In one way, however, museums easily outstrip any single aircraft or even a fleet. We can get in more damn trouble, pound for pound, than any other agency of society—and we often do! In comparison to the plane's scale in the national economy, most museums are insignificant. But in terms of the fuss they can raise in the community or even on a national scale, they are giants indeed, much to the discomfort of their trustees, directors and employees.

Now don't misunderstand me. This has its good side as well as its bad. And when it's good, it's often very good, just as it can indeed be very *bad.* I'm thinking, for example, of the public "clout" we can generate over threats to cut our

Thomas D. Nicholson is director of the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. The sidebars were prepared by Tracey Linton Craig, associate editor on the AAM's publications staff.

public funds. Museums have succeeded admirably in identifying themselves with "quality" in life style, and they have convinced political and government leaders that they give good value for dollars spent and good political image to their supporters. For what we spend on lobbying (directly and indirectly), we are getting a bargain in return. One of the worst things a politician can do is threaten the existence of a museum, any museum, regardless of how small. About the only thing worse I can think of is to force a baseball team to move out of town.

On the negative side, we are certainly very vulnerable. We don't always know why. All too often it's simply because we are here, we are public, we are easy targets and we are guaranteed to generate exposure on almost any issue even if it's not very closely related to our collections or our programs. As examples, I can cite the following at our museum. Members of Lying with the Stones (objectives a bit obscure) recently chose us as the scene of their demonstration of love for stones by lying in our cobblestone driveways. One night some years ago, at the time of the Alcatraz Island sit-in by American Indian protesters, our front steps and facade were vividly painted to illustrate the justice of the cause in California. And not very long ago, a license to demonstrate and picket in front of the museum was awarded to a group advocating equal rights for gays.

Clearly, we were not directly connected with the issues of these protesters. We were *not* the target of their controversy; none of their problems would have enlivened our days if we were not a museum! But we were a convenient, centrally located and publicly very visible site at which to present a case. I don't mean to imply that museums are uniquely subject to these kinds of pressures; we share high public visibility with universities, libraries, hospitals and prisons. But I do mean to suggest that museums get a disproportionate share of these "goodies," possibly because we are often in better locations, among other things.

The reasons are multiple and complex. Suffice it to say, however, that many (though certainly not all) of the controversies in which museums seem to find themselves represent not so much disagreements or differences between museum management and society as efforts on the part of societal groups to *use* the museum in support of their causes, either positively—in the sense of trying to force the museum to take sides in a controversy—or negatively—in the sense of targeting some practice of the museum as a focus for calling attention to the groups' goals.

Examples of positive exploitation of museums in controversy lie in the many populist causes of the 1960s and 1970s. That these causes were right or wrong is not the issue. Certainly most of us as citizens can see and respect the positive benefits to society that resulted from the antiwar movement of the 1960s, the civil rights activism of the

The Politics of Old Bones

Museums and politics. The two can make for very strange bedfellows. In New York, museums have been under siege recently. Protesters marched against the Museum of Modern Art when it opened its new building because they felt the museum exhibits shortchanged women artists. Objectors voiced loud protest when the Metropolitan Museum of Art set a 1986 opening date for an exhibition that would include archeological specimens collected from the Israeli-occupied West Bank of the Jordan River. The Met rejected the show, saying acceptance would mean "involving itself with politics"—and then reversed itself when other groups claimed that the action was anti-Semitic.

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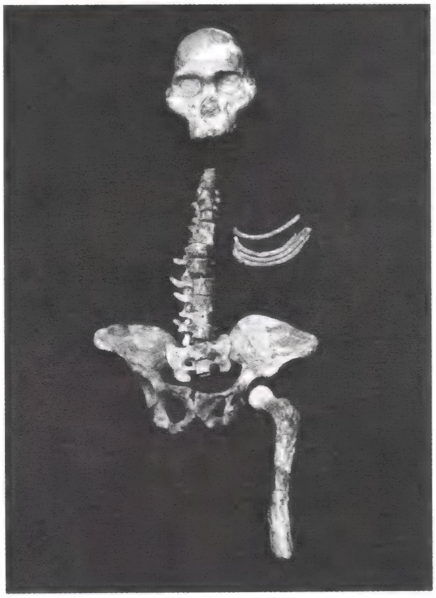
Politics of Old Bones, cont.



And there has been a furor that received ample press coverage in the *New York Times,* the *Wall Street Journal* and other papers over a show called *Ancestors: Four Million Years of Humanity* at the American Museum of Natural History. The exhibit of some 40 fossils was drawn from throughout the world, and included the two-million-year-old Taung child skull, the three-million-year-old "Lucy" and other famous artifacts. In addition to displaying these legendary fossils, the museum invited distinguished curators and scientists to study the specimens comparatively at pre-opening scientific sessions.

The problem was, some of the artifacts came from South Africa, infamous for its policy of apartheid.

Even before the exhibit opened in April of 1984, the issue was hotly debated in New York. Bronx city councilman Wendell Foster introduced two bills into the New York City Council, one asking the museum to remove the South African fossils from the display and the other calling for cutting off city aid to any institution that transacted business, cultural or otherwise, with South Africa. That would have meant a $7-million funding cut for the museum.

Quoted in the *New York Times* on May 30, 1984, councilman Foster said, "For me to vote one dime to that museum, when as a black person, I could not even get into South Africa, is self-defeating. I wouldn't vote any money for a museum to exhibit artifacts from South Africa any sooner than I would vote for it to exhibit the papers of Qaddafi or Arafat."

The conflict eventually involved New York City mayor Ed Koch, who came out against the two bills before the city council. He said, "The apartheid policies of the government of South Africa make it a pariah nation, and we must do all that is reasonable and responsible to foster change in this abhorrent system of governance. Censorship, political or scientific, is not, in my judgment, a reasonable or responsible remedy. Fossils have no nationality. They may be possessed by someone for a time, but human fossils belong to no one. They are the holy relics of humanity, and it is New York City's privilege and right, as a center of intellectual and artistic freedom, to host this exhibition."

The museum carefully defused the controversy. No protesters marched, the bones stayed on display, the museum kept its funding. Museum representatives spent weeks discussing possible solutions with groups such as the New York Southern Africa Solidarity Coalition. A few changes were agreed to—among them the erection of a small sign, placed at the show's entrance, noting that the exhibit illustrates the common ancestry of man and that the display is not political. And the museum canceled an ad from a South African tourist agency that was to run in its magazine, *Natural History.*

But the museum refused to issue a statement, as requested, against South Africa's apartheid policy. Director Thomas Nicholson went on record saying, "Since the aim of the museum is to present as fully as possible a picture of human evolution, fossils from every available source—including South Africa—were sought. To exclude these fossils would be to diminish the crucial impact of Africa in the evolutionary picture. These fossils existed millions of years before there was a political boundary denoting a country called South Africa. The strongest statement the museum can make in opposition to racism is *Ancestors* itself. All the fossils and all the participants give evidence in their materials and in their statements of the common ancestry of all humans and of the irrationality of the concept of racism." Δ

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past several decades, the so-called women's-liberation pressures of the 1970s. And there are other causes: antinuclear energy, environmental protection, atmospheric pollution, overpopulation. I know, because as a museum director, I was pressured to express "the museum's position" on each of these issues and many more, or to lend the museum's resources to the support of programs related to them. I resisted doing so on a number of grounds. I did promulgate a policy, with the approval of the trustees, to permit and encourage our staff to take activist roles in the issues that concerned them, without prejudice to their museum careers. I assume I have that right also, but *not* the right to represent all our staff and trustees by committing the museum institutionally to the causes I choose to address or the positions I choose to take on them.

Negative exploitation of the American Museum of Natural History in an issue involving conflict may best be illustrated by our experiences in the late 1970s with antivivisection protests. Relatively small but well-organized and dedicated groups of persons chose to use the museum as a mechanism for promoting their own views on the issues of animal rights and the use of animals in research.

The museum was a vulnerable target in this controversy because it carried out a series of behavioral observations and experiments in a 20-year research project on reproductive behavior in cats. For more than two years, the museum was picketed every weekend, and some protests were major demonstrations with sound trucks, celebrities and television coverage. The museum, its staff and its trustees were slandered, vilified and threatened; charges and countercharges were recklessly made; the events were widely reported. The lobbying of this small but well-organized group brought on political pressures that required a major response by museum personnel. To this day, years later, references to the charges and accusations still appear in print and in correspondence.

Regardless of right or wrong, truth or inaccuracy, the controversy itself served the purpose of the antivivisectionists. Involving the museum in an issue as emotion filled as antivivisection guaranteed the publicity they wanted. The issues were lost in the rhetoric of the debate, and the museum's defense of itself literally fueled the fires of the accusers. Form became more significant than substance, appearance more believable than fact.

I don't know what the solution to such problems may be. I doubt if there is a solution, or that we really want one, given the very efforts we make to heighten the public's awareness of museums and their significance. The more we succeed in this ambition (with all its benefits), the more vulnerable we will be to the problems that controversy and confrontation can bring. Our own transgressions (and they *do* occur) will be magnified; we will be exploited for the causes of others; our decisions and practices will be challenged *because* we have raised the public consciousness of the museum's role and its importance to society. If we wanted it any other way, we should have stayed in our "dusty, musty ivory towers" and quietly ignored the world while we shriveled and starved!

If there is any lesson we have learned from all this at the American Museum of Natural History, it is the importance of developing and practicing good community relations and public communication. Good relations and communication don't prevent problems from arising, but they do equip us to cope with them better and to minimize their impact on the institution. They will often alert us to problems early enough to plan an effective response; they help us more reasonably contain the issues and their effect on us.

We learned some of these lessons from our "cat controversy." We applied them more recently in the issues that arose over *Ancestors: Four Million Years of Humanity.* Our awareness of the potential for confrontation over issues between creationism and evolution led us in the planning of the exhibit to anticipate its controversial reception and to work out procedures for security, public relations, visitor reaction and community relations that would be effective. Controversy did come, though not from a direction we had foreseen.

Several weeks before the exhibit opened, we became aware that a number of persons and groups in our commu-

The Computer Revolution

In the last decade, computers have invaded the workplace, the school and the home. We speak of microchips and telecommunication, video games and word processors; the marks of computer processing are on our phone bills, our groceries, the bestseller we pick up at the bookstore. Computers are changing the way we live.

Chips and Changes is a traveling exhibition created by the Association of Science-Technology Centers (ASTC) in Washington, D.C., that attempts to provide a fresh and comprehensive look at how microchips are made, how they work, their rapidly proliferating applications—

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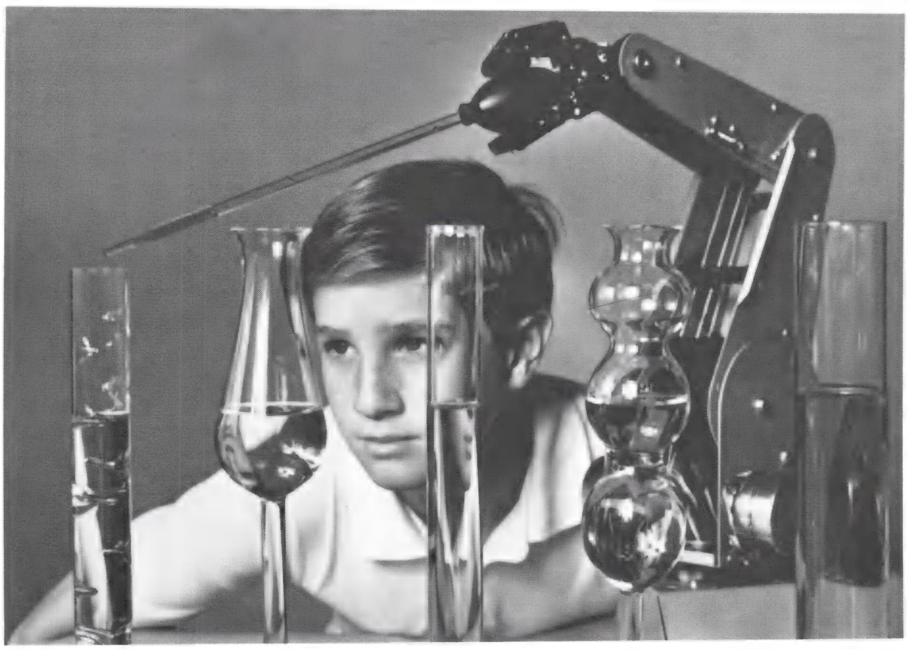

The impact of computer technology on human life is the subject of the Association of Science-Technology Centers' traveling exhibition* Chips and Changes. *The robotic arm seen here is activated by a computer.

Computer Revolution, cont.

and the impact they are having on American society. While it includes a variety of interactive displays and all the gadgetry one might expect with an exhibit on computers, it introduces important issues surrounding the effect of computers on society.

Many science museums have offered exhibits that illustrate *how* computers work, but few have dealt with the computer's social impact. This exhibit's message, according to its codesigner Pamela Rogow, is that "this is a *real* revolution."

The exhibit's project director, Sheila Grinnell, has written that "the goal of the exhibit is to provide the background visitors need to understand 'computerization.' As chips appear more frequently in many aspects of our lives, Americans will work, play, learn and think about themselves differently. *Chips and Changes* alerts visitors to these potential changes so that they are better able to evaluate microelectronics in the future."

One part of the exhibition challenges viewers to explore their fears about "thinking" machines against a background of fact. The exhibit points out trade-offs at a variety of points, prompting the visitors to evaluate ethical, economic and esthetic questions in relation to themselves.

***The history of the microchip, how it works and what it means for human activity are explored in* Chips and Changes.**

It portrays science fiction fantasy about robots, juxtaposing that vision with photos of robots at work on real assembly lines and with the comments of workers who have toiled alongside such robots. It offers visitors a chance to take a computerized poll with questions such as, What nation has the most robots in use today? and Who should pay for training programs for workers displaced by robots? Another section brings up the use of the home computer, describing not only its potential uses, but also its potential for abuses—such as the invasion of privacy.

Summing up reaction to the exhibit, Robert Lindstrom wrote in *The Oregonian,* "Where *Chips and Changes* moves away from the museum norm is in its philosophy. This is not just a high tech freakshow, ostentatiously parading the latest in intimidating new electronics. *Chips and Changes* is a human show, designed to soothe (and inform) the techno-paranoids among us and to demonstrate that microchips offer choices instead of threats, as long as we make the right choices." ∆

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nity intended to make an issue over the fact that some of the participants in the program and the fossils in the exhibit came from institutions in the Republic of South Africa. We were suddenly faced with demands to remove the fossils or to convert *Ancestors* into a vehicle for condemning the South African government. The demands were based on the view that we were, through the exhibit, collaborating with South Africa, thereby implying acceptance of its racial policies.

Our view was entirely different. We saw the invitation to participants and curators from South Africa in the same light as invitations to those from 20 other nations—it was essential to the free exchange of significant scientific information on the subject we wished to address in scholarly sessions and in the exhibit. The South African government was not involved; our relations were with institutions and individuals worldwide. The selection of participants and specimens was based on scholarly and scientific merit, not on political or social concerns.

I do not wish to address the merits of the issue in this case, but rather the way in which the controversy was handled. Our preparations for conflict paid off well. First of all, we had assured *all* the participants of the security of their specimens, to avoid concern that fear for their safety would force withdrawal. Second, once we realized we had a conflict that could become a major public issue, we identified the important goals we should aim at in attempting to handle it. Literally, we identified the objectives and the risks in the various courses of action open to us. Then we planned our actions accordingly and carried out our plans in light of our aims and the consequences we expected to achieve.

I believe that we handled the matter well, all things considered. I am convinced that we retained public confi-

dence and support throughout, and retained also the integrity of our work and our professional responsibilities. We earned the respect of our trustees in our handling of the affair, and we preserved the image of *Ancestors* we tried to establish, as the significant and unique event we planned it to be. All of this was not without its price, of course. The burden on our staff and trustees was great; the potential loss to the museum was very great. We certainly did not come away unscathed, but we did retrieve our goals and retain respect for the museum and its work.

The easiest way to avoid conflict in the museum world is to do nothing. Of course, if we do that we will be replaced very quickly by administrations willing to run the risk of conflict for the potential rewards of innovative and exciting programming. I don't think we can have both peace and quiet (and maybe boredom) of conflict-free museums and the challenging museum world we have built in the United States during the last several decades.

I don't mean to imply, however, that we should seek out and emphasize controversy in our programming in order to draw promotion and audiences. I do mean that we should not necessarily withdraw from a program selected and planned on other appropriate grounds because it may be controversial. The latter is precisely the role we took with respect to *Ancestors.* We chose to produce and present it for good reasons. We recognized readily that it could involve the museum in a public controversy (even though we missed the issue badly). We did not choose the exhibit

The Atom: Both Sides Now

The hands of the clock, melted by extreme heat, point to 8:10 A.M., the hour at which Nagasaki was bombed on August 6, 1945. A photograph in stark black and white shows the shadow of a Japanese soldier and his sword, created when the blinding flash of the atomic explosion vaporized him, burning the tar coating from the wall and leaving the shadowy impression of a human being. A powerful watercolor by an amateur artist reveals anguish and mass panic as people dive into the water off Suniyoshi Bridge to escape the blast.

Each artifact is painful to look at. Each is an important part of an exhibit called *The Atom: Peril and Promise,* created by the Cleveland Health Education Museum and cosponsored by the William Bingham Foundation of Ohio.

The exhibit, which was on view from November 1982 through March 1983 at the Cleveland museum, is currently traveling throughout the country under the auspices of the Association of Science-Technology Centers. It is unusual in that it explores

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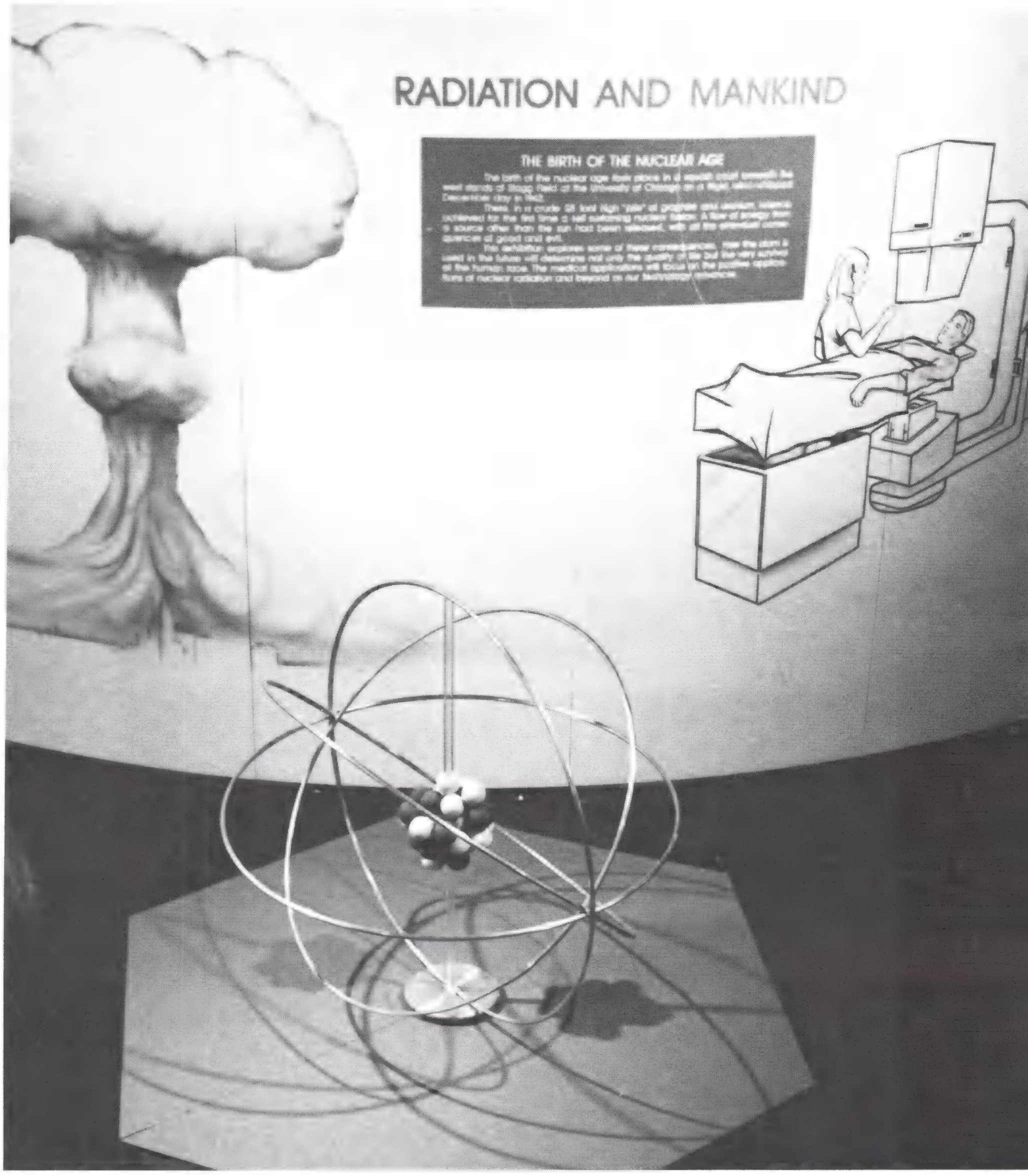


The Atom, cont.

both sides of the atomic energy issue. The tripart show first explains what radiation is and where it is found, then considers its negative effects, telling the story of the American bombing of Japan at the end of World War II. Finally, it discusses the peaceful uses of the atom—the technological gains such as ultrasound and thermography that have come from harnessing the atom's power. When it addresses nuclear power, it does not flinch in pointing out the difficulties and health hazards that can result from nuclear power plant operations.

The exhibit took both the public and the press in Cleveland by surprise. The Cleveland Health Education Museum is known primarily as a health museum. As an educational institution, the museum felt it needed to deal with both sides of the coin, that it needed to raise the public's awareness of what it knew would be a painful topic. Planners recognized the potential for controversy that existed. So did the sponsoring Bingham Foundation. But, as public relations director Carol Czerny points out, "The foundation was brave and committed to this."

The museum wanted each visitor to come to his own conclusions about the atom and decided to provide as much information as it could in order for that to happen. It planned a lecture series call "Nuke Talk," which provided information on ICBMs and their manufacture and the myths of radiation. A theater group from neighboring Oberlin College presented a moving drama for visitors entitled "Ghosts of Hiroshima." Response was overwhelming; the supplementary programs were repeated.

The museum decided to assess the exhibit's impact via a questionnaire. Nine out of 10 respondents raved about the exhibit. Comments included, "It should be available longer" and "People have to *see* this." The local paper covered the exhibit, then sent its art reviewer to critique the segment that showed survivors' art. Word of mouth brought some 12,000 additional visitors, and visitation increased by 12 percent during the show.

In introducing the exhibit, Bingham Foundation executive director Carol K. Willen wrote,

> In order to make enlightened decisions on important subjects, individuals in a free society require ample information from reliable sources. Wise choices are more likely to result when advantages and disadvantages are carefully weighed.... The theme of choice underlies the entire exhibition. The title itself suggests the delicate counterpoise of risk and benefit.... As a citizen, consumer or medical patient, the individual needs to understand the interrelationship of benefit and risk, of projected gains and potential losses.... It is the hope of the William Bingham Foundation that viewers of *The Atom: Peril and Promise* will come away from this exhibition with a heightened sense of the power of the atom as well as a better knowledge of their own choices.

Museum staffers believe the exhibit fulfilled that mission and went a long way toward raising the level of awareness in the community. Though they had some initial worries about how the exhibit would be received, they are pleased with the end result. It brought them local attention and made people think.

The museum plans to launch other exhibits on such topics as world hunger, aging and consumer product safety. "Our responsibility," Czerny says, "is to make people think. If that means being controversial, so be it." Δ

because its subject was controversial; neither did we withdraw from it when we recognized its potential for conflict.

I don't believe that museums have any responsibility to present exhibits because they are controversial, or to plan and present exhibits around contemporary issues, controversial or not. Museum managers may want to address issues in exhibits and in other ways; they may give in to pressures for doing so whether they want to or not, but I don't think they have any great responsibility to do so.

The reasons for selecting exhibits are diverse and complex and invariably involve choices among many options. Within this process, the only thing we have a responsibility to exhibit is our collections. That's one of the reasons we have them. Our choices of exhibit design, theme and script, our choices of the objects we select for display, may reflect judgmental values of many kinds. One possibility may be the relevance of the object in shedding light on contemporary issues, sometimes controversial. The decision whether we should do so again involves many more judgments.

One problem, but by no means the only one, in planning exhibits to address contemporary issues and conflicts, is that ideas all too often produce very bad exhibits. As a general rule, great exhibits emerge from great collections, even though we may arrange them to illustrate a story. But great ideas, in the sense of interesting and important stories, may not be suitable to the exhibition medium. To express it in another way, just because an idea needs communicating doesn't mean that it should be communicated by a museum or that it should be communicated through an exhibition. Most ideas can be more effectively and efficiently communicated through other media.

Ancestors met all our criteria for good exhibits. It was clearly object-oriented. We believed the objects had high audience appeal. They were rare and unique. They were original sources of fundamental scientific information in a field clearly within the scope of our museum and, we were convinced, high in interest level for the public. The focus of the exhibition was the specimens; graphics were supplementary, identifying inferences and relationships and describing hypotheses that could be identified from the specimens themselves. That the issue of creationism versus evolution was a timely one gave us an added bonus. This issue involves the museum closely and much of its work. It is an issue on which we are competent to speak with authority. It involves a challenge to the museum's most basic purposes and programs. But we were not looking for controversy in *Ancestors*. We were looking for good objects. We found both! Δ

The Kind of Response That Art Can Have

An Interview with Brenda Richardson

Carolee Belkin Walker

In 1863, when Edouard Manet's* Déjeuner sur l'herbe *was first exhibited at the Salon de Refusés—established by Napoleon III for those turned down by the official salon — the public was scandalized to see a nude young woman sitting on the grass with two men in contemporary dress. The shock was repeated two years later with* Olympia, *the direct gaze of the reclining courtesan described as "insolent vulgarity."

We wanted to know how today's curators perceive the role of their museums in giving light to, and introducing the public to, new art. What practical considerations go into the planning of potentially controversial exhibitions? Do museums generally experience increased vandalism when nontraditional forms of art are on display? What about the larger questions of responsibility? Should an art museum show works that some might deny are art? or some might contend are amoral, pornographic, racist, sexist? Should the art museum act as educator of public taste? as censor? as arbiter? Should it attempt to shape public opinion?

We put some of these questions to BRENDA RICHARDSON, assistant director of the Baltimore Museum of Art and curator of painting and sculpture, who served as curator for the recent* Gilbert and George *exhibition. The interview was conducted by CAROLEE BELKIN WALKER, assistant editor on the AAM publications staff and a docent at the Baltimore Museum.

—Ed.

The works of Gilbert and George have been described as amoral, pornographic, fascist, racist, petit-bourgeois. In preparing for the show, did you take these considerations into account?

I did not, primarily because I don't accept any of those adjectives as being true or applicable to their work. I don't deny that those adjectives have been used; the press has used them for years. For instance, at a certain point in the work of Gilbert and George when, along with many other subjects, the so-called skinhead showed up in maybe three or four pieces, the work was interpreted as fascist. When the artists used black subjects, the work was called racist. When they have depicted sexual subjects or sexual graffiti, the work was called pornographic.

Generalizing from what they see in the work of art, some people then call Gilbert and George fascist and racist. I don't actually know of any other work in modern art history where such epithets have been generalized from the work to the personal character of the artist. People aren't saying it's a fascist work, they're saying that Gilbert and George are fascist individuals. This is an interesting confusion; I would never myself be so arrogant as to suggest what Gilbert and George's personal political philosophy might be. I don't know how they vote in elections, for instance; I wouldn't consider it appropriate to ask them. I do look at

the work, and I see what's in the work, and, for me, the work does not reflect any of those particular descriptive adjectives.

What about when you first began thinking about the exhibition? Did you have any trouble convincing the director or the board of trustees that there was more to Gilbert and George than the controversial treatment they receive in the press?

In our museum, we don't have to persuade anyone but the director; our board does not elect to approve specific exhibition decisions. What the trustees have, of course, is the right to dismiss the director if they don't like what he or she does. So the only person I have to persuade is the director. And it didn't take any persuasion at all, because our director, Arnold Lehman, is a great admirer of the work of Gilbert and George. He agreed with me that their work was extremely important in the history of modern art, and since there had never been a major museum show of Gilbert and George in America, the decision to go ahead was clear-cut. A show of Gilbert and George seemed appropriate and exciting and relevant, not the slightest bit controversial as an exhibition-scheduling decision. We certainly were aware that Gilbert and George's work incorporates subject matter some people might consider controversial, but that was never an issue in making the decision to do the show. No, it never came up.

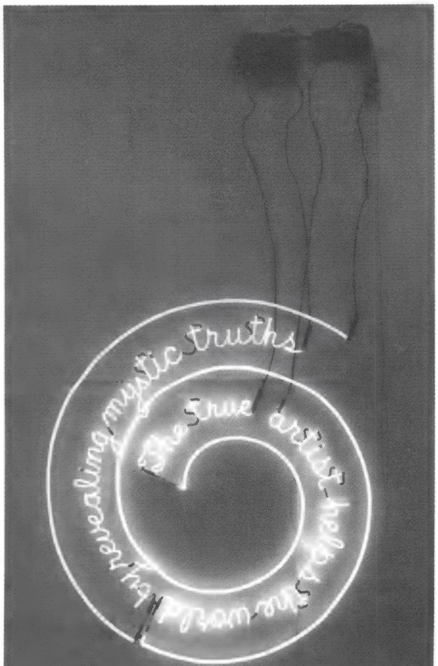
What about on a broader scale, not just the Gilbert and George show. Think back to the planning of Bruce Nauman's exhibit of neons, or even the Frank Stella Black Painting retrospective you did in 1976. I'm sure you're aware that even today a lot of people entering the galleries are wondering why we're putting this stuff on the walls and questioning whether or not it is art. Sometimes that questioning is what makes a show "controversial." How would you react to that?*

That's very, very difficult for me to react to—it would be very difficult for any curator or any museum professional or art historian to respond to—because you are talking about Frank Stella and Bruce Nauman and Gilbert and George. They are among the most established of modern figures and certainly among the most—I mean Nauman and Stella certainly—internationally acclaimed modern figures; their reputations are beyond reproach. No one in

*Brenda Richardson was the curator for *Frank Stella: The Black Paintings* (1976) and *Bruce Nauman: Neons* (1982), at the Baltimore Museum of Art.

The installation of* Frank Stella: The Black Paintings *(1976) at the Baltimore Museum of Art was for art historians a retrospective of great significance. For some members of the public, the Black Paintings continue to spark considerable confusion.

One of Bruce Nauman's earliest neon sculptures,* Window or Wall Sign *(1967), was originally placed outside the artist's studio. Though Richardson's installation of the Nauman exhibition in Baltimore was not itself controversial, some people felt works in neon could not be considered art.



the art world considers Stella or Nauman controversial, and certainly no one questions whether their work is art. Gilbert and George are, I suspect, a little less well established in American art history, though internationally their reputation is probably equivalent to Nauman's. It may be that there is less consensus that their work is of the same importance as Nauman's, but as contemporary art figures they are very well established.

But what about among the public, people who think of Copley or Winslow Homer as established?

I know. I'm not incredulous in the sense that I don't believe it, because of course I hear it too, but it's so far from anything we would consider in scheduling. For instance, we are looking forward to an exhibition of juke boxes from the 1930s and 1940s. Now, I could get a more viable argument going among my colleagues as to whether juke boxes are in fact art. I consider them primary examples of 20th-century decorative art. But there certainly are professionals who would say that juke boxes are an aspect of popular or social culture that has nothing to do with art per se. I certainly can get a stronger argument from my colleagues about the fact that we're doing a Grandma Moses show. They don't consider Grandma Moses art. None of our docents, I suspect, would have any problem dealing with Grandma Moses as art. So you see, it's just a question of your background, your training and, most important, your experience. If you've been exposed to art for a long enough time, I suspect that your definitions of what it is and isn't become extremely broad, and you just don't have that problem.

Since you're asking about how museums make decisions about exhibitions, I have to say that whether the public thinks of a work as art or not just isn't an issue. Frank Stella's Black Paintings are among the most important bodies of work produced in the 20th century, and that's not an overstatement. The fact that the exhibition was done had enormous significance for art and for history, and, as a museum endeavor in cataloging, it represented, I hope, significant scholarship. Similarly with Bruce Nauman's neons; Nauman was one of the earliest figures to work with neon as a sculpture medium, and no one had ever looked at all his neon work as a body, how it developed from the beginning. It's just not an issue whether it's art. I suppose what you're saying stems from the fact that the art happens to be a neon. But neon is just a medium; it's a material. Instead of working in bronze — though Nauman's done that too—this particular body of work was done in neon.

So your question is a hard one for me to answer. The question of how you address the public, how you respond to that criticism that the work you show is not art is one thing, but if you ask whether we take that into consideration as an issue in our scheduling decisions, I would have to say we do not.

Are there any practical considerations that you feel must be taken into account when you are planning what the public may initially view as a controversial show? For example, did you ever worry that someone might visit the Gilbert and George exhibit and become appalled at something and try to damage the works?

Yes. We are concerned about that in the sense that we live in the real world, and we know that such things happen; museums experience incidents of vandalism, and so obviously you have to be on the alert. Many instances of vandalism in modern history relate to sexual subject matter. There are a lot of people with emotional problems who occasionally exorcise their feelings by doing damage to works of art that somehow provoke them. There have been, for example, instances in which genital areas on paintings have been poked with knives or pencils or other sharp objects. That tends to be the nature of a certain kind of vandalism; random vandalism is much less common.

Interestingly enough, the color black tends to provoke vandalism, and so we were very cautious when we had the Stella Black Painting exhibition. There is some precedent for black-colored objects being provocative, and indeed we experienced such an incident in our museum. The first show I did when I came to Baltimore was a group show of 14 artists, including Richard Serra. For that show Serra did his first installation of oil stick on canvas, all black, stretched and stapled to the wall. It was not slashed, but some viewer marked on it. In some sense the tactile oil stick surface seems to invite marking. On some level I can perhaps understand that visitors want to participate. Today we encourage participation in museums; we sponsor theater

I just don't believe in force-feeding; you find what you need in life, and you find what you need in an art museum.... People need esthetic enrichment in their lives, and they find it where they need it.

and music; we ask visitors to become more involved; we don't want to be the sort of forbidding, untouchable institution with the lions out front in which everyone has to shush their kids. We're trying to make the museum a lively place for everyone, and when you do that it's very hard to expect viewers to draw the line between where active participation is expected and where it's forbidden. I suppose therefore we should not be all that surprised when people want to add their marks to the artist's on a Serra oil stick, for instance.

However, as a result not just of that incident but also the recognition that somehow visitors are provoked by the color black, we did have extra guards during the Stella

retrospective. And nothing happened. Quite the contrary, as far as I know the Black Stellas were remarkably well received. By now, they are icons of modern art, and apparently not controversial in that sense.

For *Gilbert and George* we also had extra guards, not for concern about vandalism but because of the potential for theft. Each of the units in the Gilbert and George photopieces is individually hung and can be removed from the wall, though not easily. Since each unit is relatively small, it is conceivable that parts could disappear, and we wanted to take every precaution. Logistically speaking, we have many small framed works on our walls, and we always secure them. But with the Gilbert and George photopieces, the way the frame is designed and attached to the wall, it actually can't be physically secured, and so we assigned extra guards.

What about vandalism? Did you take extra precautions there?

Since the works are under plexiglass, there's virtually nothing that could happen to them. Someone could attack them, but only the plexiglass would be scratched. So it really wasn't an issue.

As a matter of fact, we didn't have much hostile response to the Gilbert and George exhibition. People thought the work was full of challenging ideas, and they wanted to figure out what it was about. We discovered that viewers spent more time in the Gilbert and George show than they ordinarily spend in exhibitions. Clearly they were more involved with this work. I think people who were terribly put off by the subject matter just left. We have no way of knowing how many that might be, but I think not too many. Whatever minimal negative reaction we had was not in fact to the exhibition but to the catalog. The catalog was sent on a complimentary basis to our higher category museum members, as all our catalogs are, and a tiny number, a minute number, of people who received it were offended by what they saw in the book. They had not actually seen the exhibition but wrote us that they were distressed that the museum was supporting subject matter of that sort. That kind of reaction, which I must say our Public Information Office expected a great deal more of, we didn't get. As far as I know, we never had any negative criticism from the press. The general nature of the subject matter was discussed in the press, but always in reportorial or positive terms. And so, though we had anticipated there might be some negative fallout, in fact there was substantially less than we had expected.

It's inevitable that you should expect some sort of negative fallout, especially since all most people know about Gilbert and George initially are the stereotypes we mentioned earlier. The show opens. The public is both anxious and a bit confused. What kinds of considerations go into educational programming? How much responsibility do you, as a curator, as a representative of the museum, take for helping the public understand what Gilbert and George—or even Frank Stella—are all about?

Well, we go out of our way, I think, to present public programming that is designed to elucidate the work on view, and that's true of all our shows. Some people find *John Shaw: Cabinetmaker of Annapolis** very difficult. They don't perceive refinements and subtle differences between one sideboard or chair and another, and so Shaw's work requires its own kind of elucidation.

You may get a hostile response from certain segments of the public, and, of course, we do what we can to prepare for that. At the same time, and in part because the shows you're asking about have all been ones I've curated, we try not to overinterpret them. I have very strong feelings about overinterpretation; I think in essence it represents a kind of arrogance on the part of the museum. I happen to believe that the most meaningful relationship — and the reason I'm here — is the relationship between the object and the viewer. I credit viewers with sufficient intelligence and sensitivity to come to the object with their own experience and emotional makeup and respond accordingly. I am not devastated—I'm speaking personally as a curator now—if one or more viewers come into the neon show and say, with either anger or amusement, "This isn't art," and walk out. Since I work in a museum dedicated to the history of art, viewers can walk a few steps next door and look at Rembrandt or Matisse or John Shaw furniture or any number of other things. And I hope that they will find pleasure and learning in those things that they do respond to. So that in terms of in-gallery interpretation, I personally don't like it. Administratively, however, we allow our curators — to a certain extent—to make those kinds of decisions. Some of our curators prefer more interpretive materials in their exhibitions, some prefer less. We give administrative guidance and direction, but, within reason, we view that as a personal decision.

Now in terms of how we do interpret, we focus on lectures, gallery talks and of course the catalog itself, which we view as very important. We think that if visitors find something puzzling and want to know more about the work, they have access to the catalog, which we display in the gallery on a catalog stand, and it's available for people to look through. If they are really interested, presumably they buy a catalog. And then they have the option to study the material and come back to the work with that information in their minds. Or they may choose to come to the gallery talks given by docents, by curators or by outside scholars. The candid bottom line, of course, is that visitors don't do any of these things if they're hostile to start with; they will walk away and not come back, and they certainly won't avail themselves of opportunities to learn about the

**John Shaw: Cabinetmaker of Annapolis* was an exhibition at the Baltimore Museum of Art in 1983.

Henri Matisse's* Blue Nude *(1907) is the focus of Baltimore's affection for the museum's comprehensive collection of the artist's works. But when the painting was first shown in Paris, the public found it offensive.

exhibition or the artist. I ultimately take a rather sanguine view, as I said; I have to hope that something else in the museum will engage these visitors. What I'm saying is I just don't believe in force-feeding; you find what you need in life, and you find what you need in an art museum. And I mean that in a very heartfelt way. People need esthetic enrichment in their lives, and they find it where they need it. By necessity—and happily—each individual's esthetic enrichment derives from a different source.

Do you think that the public's response to any of these exhibitions varies greatly from city to city?

Absolutely.

Speaking again about Gilbert and George, *which will travel from Baltimore to Houston to West Palm Beach to Milwaukee and then finally to the Guggenheim in New York,* in planning the show, did you consider which cities it might travel to best?*

No, in fact that's not up to us to decide. We offer the exhibition to selected institutions that we think would be appropriate locations for the exhibition, not in terms of subject matter but in terms of colleagues who can handle it, who might be interested in it. These colleagues book the show with a full awareness of what the exhibition contains. And so, presumably, they are conscious of any potential difficulties they may have with their communities. There's no question, however, that an exhibition like *Gilbert and George* or *Bruce Nauman* would be received differently in Los Angeles from the way it might be received in Little Rock; they're very different places, and standards and information levels are different. And probably, though not consistently, the kind of reaction you're talking about—calling it not art, or thinking it's not art—would be more intense in a provincial location.

In terms of *Gilbert and George,* none of the participating museums expressed any concern whatsoever about the "controversial subject matter" except New York, and that's interesting to me. Perhaps because New Yorkers have seen virtually everything and therefore have experienced institutional controversy at one time or another, they may be more conscious of it and more concerned about it. But in fact, of all my colleagues who booked the show, only those at the Guggenheim expressed concern about possible controversy in subject matter. I thought perhaps that my colleagues in Milwaukee, for instance, might have anticipated some difficulty with community reception. But they're incredibly excited about the show and haven't expressed any concern whatsoever about content or subject matter. They've seen the catalog, of course; they know what's in the show. I think that we've all come a long way.

**Gilbert and George* was at the Baltimore Museum of Art from February 19 to April 15, 1984, and the Contemporary Arts Museum in Houston from June 23 to August 19, 1984. Currently at the Norton Gallery of Art in West Palm Beach, Florida, from September 29 to November 25, 1984, it will be at the Milwaukee Art Museum from January 11 to March 17, 1985, and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York City from April 26 to June 16, 1985.

I wanted to ask you about that. Historically, this certainly isn't the first time this issue of controversial art has come up. For one, when Manet's Olympia *was first shown to the public, I understand there was a great deal of controversy.*

The same with Matisse's *Blue Nude.*

Yes. I wonder if you could talk a little about these two paintings and then maybe how far we've come. I'm sure there are great differences between the turn of the century and today regarding the relationship among the museum, art and society.

Well, I think one of the crucial differences—and I'm not a historian in the sense of knowing the demographics of museum attendance—but my strong suspicion is that the base of museum attendance has broadened considerably. In terms of this museum at least—a city and private museum —we draw our audience from a very broad segment of the community, and we hope it gets even broader every day. As that base of interest and support broadens, you just simply open the door to a wider and wider range of response to what you're showing. Around the turn of the century, attendance at museums may have been drawn from a smaller segment of the community — individuals who were perhaps already more involved with the art world, and who thus approached art more knowingly. But I can't imagine that art was any less subject to controversial response. In some ways—I'm thinking out loud now—the response was much stronger. Press response to the showing of Matisse's *Blue Nude* was simply vitriolic. The art was called pornographic, and it was considered obscene; it was attacked mercilessly by established critics, by intelligent, informed individuals. Certainly it was not the general public that was attacking the painting; it was an informed audience. So I'm trying to think what the differences are. We have shown what some people would consider controversial work and had no criticism from the press and, as far as we can measure it, negligible criticism from our public.

Does it make a difference whether the artist is alive or dead?

I don't think so. I don't think there's any difference there.

Does medium make a difference?

I think in reference to Gilbert and George, there's a big difference between the medium of painting and the medium of photography. Gilbert and George don't consider themselves photographers, and I don't consider their work photography. Nonetheless, the images are generated through the photographic medium. To the general public, I suspect, a painted nude is somehow art, just because it's painted. The public may not like it, but at least it's art. There are many people, however, who would consider a photograph of the same nude as not art—it's documentary, it didn't take "art" to make it. And so in that sense the photograph, the photographic image, may elicit a much stronger response than the painted or sculpted image.

For instance, when we were talking about the Gilbert and George show in-house, and discussing with our public relations staff whether we should make any "defensive" preparations, I took the position that we should not. But we aren't so naive or foolish that we didn't discuss the possibility. I pointed out that our African art displays depict subject matter that is substantially more sexually explicit than anything in Gilbert and George. There's no explicit sexual imagery in the work of Gilbert and George that we showed. Yet no one finds African art objectionable on account of its sexually explicit imagery. Perhaps people see African art as historical artifact, as opposed to something contemporary, and their stronger response to the contemporary may be compounded by the fact that the image is photographically generated.

Now, just so that all this doesn't sound so Pollyannaish, indeed there are works of art created by Gilbert and George that are occasionally somewhat more explicit — imagery that is either sexually explicit or that combines sexual and religious subjects in ways that some viewers are sensitive to. It was my determination that certain of those works could not be shown in American public museums. Now that, of course, immediately suggests censorship, and on some level it is. There's no denying it. As a curator, I had to make a judgment call. I did not want to whitewash the exhibition because then why am I doing it? As far as I'm concerned, integral to the work of Gilbert and George is a very powerful sexual, religious, political subject matter, and their best work is the most powerfully depicted, and so it would be to my disadvantage and dishonor to weaken that show by whitewashing its content. So, that was not at all my intention. But there were certain very specific pieces that I thought could not be shown in an American public museum. Those pieces or comparable ones have been shown in European public museums and in private commercial galleries, some in New York City. But of course, that's a whole different ball game. In Europe, anything and everything is shown, and people who go into a commercial gallery in New York do so because they know exactly what they're going to see; they can also turn around and walk out if they like. But you have to be somewhat more cautious about what you put before visitors to a major American public museum where people come to visit other things and may happen to see Gilbert and George, artists they've never heard of and don't want to see and don't like. And since it was possible to do the Gilbert and George show strongly, and correctly reflect the subject matter without including the most provocative and confrontational works, I did that.

How do you go about getting funding for shows of "controversial" art? Are you ever in the position of having to compromise the show to get funding for some of it?

Modern art can be difficult to get corporate funding for. Again, and this is admirable and perfectly understandable, corporations as a general rule want to support exhibitions as a public relations arm. It makes marvelous sense for companies to fund popular exhibitions because such shows have a very large, captive audience. People go in and out of the exhibition and they pass signs, and if that sign has a corporation's name on it, whether visitors consciously notice or not, they see the name; it imprints. If an exhibition is thought to be controversial, visitors may come and go with a negative frame of mind and then subliminally associate the corporation with those negative feelings. In that case, the company has not done very well by its advertising budget. So I think it's quite natural for a corporation to prefer to sponsor something that it knows will not be controversial.

I think it goes without saying that finding corporate support for modern art — really modern, not Renoir — is probably more difficult than for less controversial art. Certainly for *Gilbert and George* it was difficult to find corporate funding. But we do have a national corporate sponsor— Best Products Company. I must say that, to its never-ending credit, Best decided it wanted to put its full support behind this project, and its board and staff have been incredibly supportive and enthusiastic in every way. I have no way of measuring what the company views as a positive or negative response to its sponsorship. I'm sure Best has been pleased by the extensive press coverage for *Gilbert and George.* Company representatives have told us they're very pleased by the entire project and the way everything has gone, but in terms of advertising value for the dollar invested, for instance, I have no way of knowing how they measure that. These are experienced business people, however, and I assume Best's continuing active support of exhibitions around the country speaks for the viability of its public relations efforts.

Richardson and her staff anticipated public controversy over the* Gilbert and George *exhibition, but to everyone's pleasure, the show was well received. Museum members previewed the works, and only a few who received a complimentary copy of the catalog voiced opposition to the exhibition.

What about government funding?

We also had funding from the National Endowment for the Arts for *Gilbert and George,* and we had British Council support, which is to say funding from the British government, as well. Government support I think has absolutely nothing to do with content; it has everything to do with quality. Peer panels determine which projects get NEA funding and which don't. Those peer panels consist of extremely well-informed people who make decisions on the basis of merit, and certainly the issue of controversy plays no role. I can't imagine that the NEA has had any negative response from its sponsorship of *Gilbert and George.*

Overall, I'm wondering what you think of the museum emerging as an increasingly public institution. Does this put additional pressure on you as a curator, or as an assistant director, to guide the museum in ways the public may feel more comfortable with?

I suppose that's a role that has been emerging since the 1950s and the 1960s, and certainly there's been an enormous expansion in sheer numbers of museums in recent years. There is a tremendous appetite among the American public for art, I'm happy to say, and the most obvious resource is the museum.

Of course our responsibility is to the public as our audience, and it's just a question of how you define that responsibility. Our responsibility as we see it administratively is to collect, exhibit and preserve the best art forms of all periods that we represent as an institution. Our director is answerable to a board of trustees and, of course, to the mayor and the city council, and he is employed at their will. If in fact there was massive community dissatisfaction that had a dramatic effect on public or private funding or support, then the director could be removed.

The only thing that I feel very strongly about—and I'm not the director of the museum — is that you can't "talk down" to your public. I say that out of enormous respect for the public. I don't think our job is necessarily "to give the public what it wants." Practically speaking, we couldn't do that. If you took a poll of members of "the general public" —whoever they may be—and you asked them for a list of what they wanted to see, first of all, they wouldn't know the names of the most important artists of the 20th century, certainly, and probably not of the century before that. We don't teach art history in most of our schools. The

only place to learn art history is in our museums, and we consider our museums to have a very powerful teaching function in that regard—"teaching" meaning you put it on the walls for the public to see, because otherwise people don't know about it.

So you can't really look to your audience for direction on what you should be showing. You have to take your combined resources — staff resources, their educations, their experience, their particular passions, which are indeed a part of programming—and you trust those resources until something goes dramatically wrong in the opinion of your director or board, and then you address it or you change staff members. Those are about the only options. Certainly there are museums and art centers in America that show what their communities want, but they're not highly esteemed institutions and they're not making major contributions to scholarship. They do what they do because of lack of information, not lack of taste. But lack of information, of education, really, is something we have to reckon with. It's certainly true that most of our audience is extremely uninformed about the history of art, because that's in the nature of American education. Europeans are much better informed than Americans about art history. We have to use our best judgment about what we think is important, and what we would like our audience to be made aware of, and even then, practically speaking, we can only do a little bit of that.

I think we should be in the business of moving people, touching them somehow.... Isn't it amazing that art can have that kind of response, that it means that much to people?

Do you ever worry about losing the public's trust?

Well, I'd never thought about it exactly like that. I know the public trusts museums, and we're in a position of authority, and most of our audience assumes that we know what we're doing.

No, I would never be afraid of losing the public's trust by showing something that I and/or another informed group thought to be important. I don't want to appear overly naive; I'm not suggesting that we didn't know Gilbert and George could be controversial to a segment of the public. I would have to say that it never crossed my mind that Stella and Nauman were controversial, in that sense; people's angry response to neon took me by surprise. Now that in itself may be naive; in fact, it most certainly is.

But with *Gilbert and George*, as I said earlier, we had discussions in-house about how to handle possible adverse responses. There was, for instance, a discussion about whether a sign should be put up suggesting that parents might want to escort their children. Today I received an announcement of Gilbert and George's film being shown at the North Carolina Museum of Art that includes the caution, "The museum recommends this film only for mature viewers." I was astounded, only because we considered this kind of caution and rejected it. I feel, we feel, very strongly that there is nothing in the work of Gilbert and George that is inherently offensive to viewers of any age. And as soon as you put a sign up like that, you suggest that there is. I believe that any works by Gilbert and George that could be considered offensive by rational people were, in fact, not put into the exhibition, for exactly that reason.

So the issue of betraying the public's trust is not something you worry about?

No, it has not crossed my mind, not in terms of the art we show. Obviously, I would betray the public's trust if I were cheating on my travel money, or stealing art from the collection or doing something that was patently illegal or professionally unethical. In terms of the art that we show, no, I can't imagine that we're in violation of public trust, or that we're putting it at risk. I am extremely proud of this museum's exhibition record.

I must say from my — perhaps ivory-tower — perspective, I would feel that I were violating the public's trust if I showed only sequential exhibitions of Andrew Wyeth or LeRoy Neiman, for instance, a series of art works that would be viewed with pleasure but would in no way educate, challenge, enlighten or otherwise create the possibility of a dialogue, of a meaningful dialogue, between the viewer and the work of art. If I did that, if we consistently scheduled exhibitions that were easy, probably pleasurable to most people, but lacking what I consider to be moral and esthetic content, then I would feel I was betraying the public's trust.

And for the handful of people who write angry, disturbed letters and cancel their membership—over, incidentally, a surprising range of exhibitions and issues — and say they can't be associated with an institution that would do this kind of thing, even then perhaps we're doing our job. I think we should be in the business of moving people, touching them somehow. That's not exactly how we'd like to touch them in the best of all possible worlds, but isn't it amazing that art can have that kind of response, that it means that much to people?

In the end, it's incredibly rewarding. We sit in our offices and we like to believe that art can change the world, but on some level, we're never too sure. And then you find out that it can. I mean, certain people can get that disturbed by it, or that elated by it. Both reactions happen. Many people came to us and said that seeing Gilbert and George's work was the most moving experience they'd ever had in a museum. So both things happen. And that's an integral and exciting aspect of being part of a great public museum. Δ

Causing Conflict, Doing Violence

Thomas J. Schlereth

conflict:
a clash, competition or mutual interference of opposing or incompatible forces or qualities such as ideas, interests or wills

violence:
an exertion of any physical force so as to injure or abuse; an intense, turbulent or furious action, force or feeling, often destructive

Museum historians, like most decent people, usually try to avoid conflict. Physical violence is likewise abhorred. Yet the history we collect and curate is shot through with social, cultural, generational, economic and psychological conflicts; the past that we examine and exhibit is, if the truth be told, racked with much individual and collective violence.

To be sure, most of us recognize that group violence and ideological conflict attended both our national birth in the American Revolution and our national preservation and the expurgation of slavery in the Civil War. These tumultuous events provide the rationale for many of our most popular museums. Even in these museums, however, the types of human behavior described above by the definitions of conflict and violence are not always adequately portrayed. Moreover, the extent and impact of *domestic*

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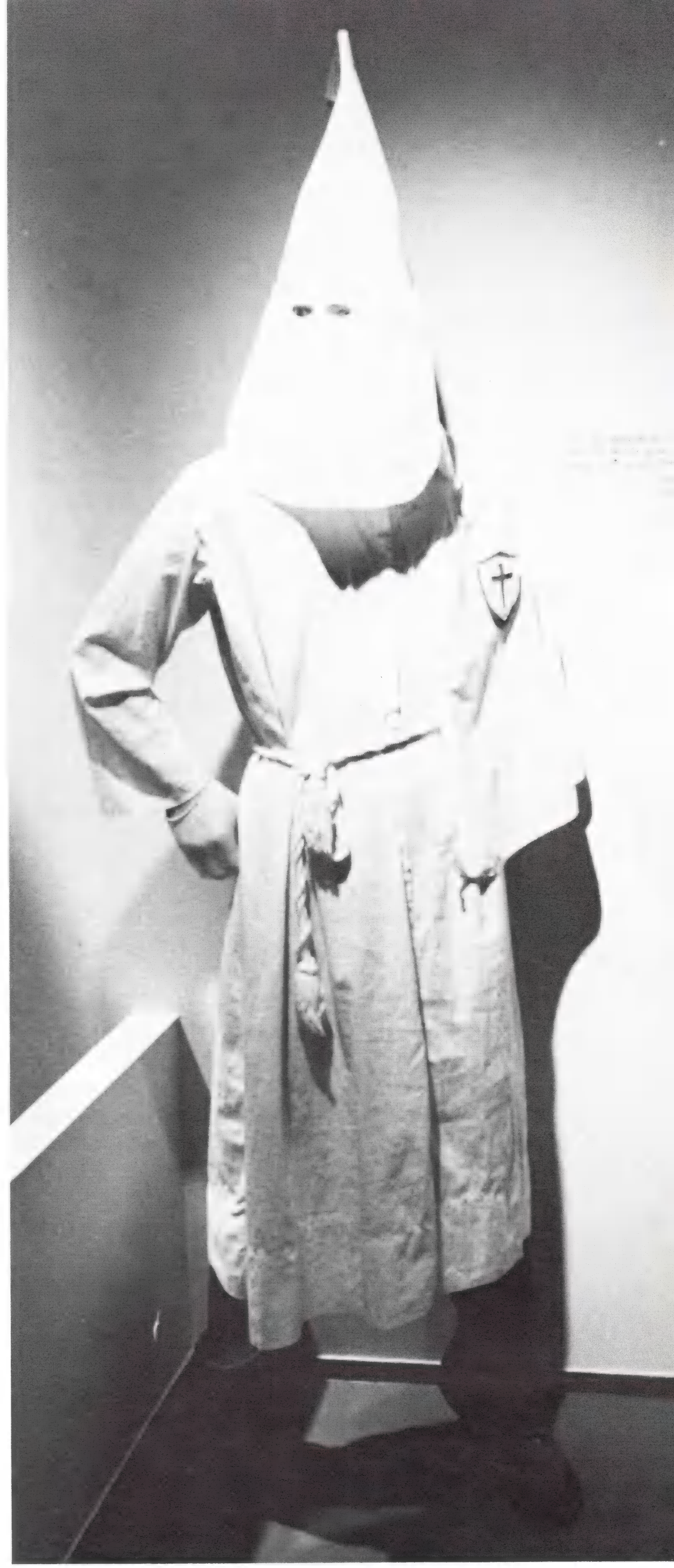

Another Side of the Twentieth Century, ***an exhibit at the Allen County-Fort Wayne Historical Society, in Fort Wayne, Indiana, attempts accurate portrayals of uncomfortable aspects of American history, including the activities of the Ku Klux Klan in a northern Midwestern city in the 1920s.***

conflict and violence in American history are almost totally ignored. We have been victims of what members of the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence have called "a historical amnesia" regarding "the sheer commonplaceness of conflict and violence in our past."

Why is this so? We historians, whether we work in the museum or the academy, are at least partially to blame. Until a decade ago, the topic received little attention. While Progressive historians such as Charles Beard, Carl Becker, Frederick Jackson Turner and Vernon Parrington did depict the American past in terms of conflicting economic and political interests — Patriots versus Tories, Federalists versus Anti-Federalists, Democrats versus Whigs, populists versus plutocrats — the vast majority of American historiography is consensual. Only since the 1960s have we admitted to the drama and the dimensions of personal conflict and public violence in the historical American psyche.

The extent and impact of domestic conflict and violence in American history are almost totally ignored. . . . We historians, whether we work in the museum or the academy, are at least partially to blame.

In addition to the fact that conflict and violence usually produce equally unsavory and unsettling reactions in ourselves and our audiences, the interpretation of these historical phenomena pose nettlesome institutional and methodological problems for museum historians. Interpretation is problematic because the topic lacks cohesion. In America, conflict and violence have largely lacked both a geographical and an ideological center. As Richard Hofstadter once pointed out in *American Violence*, very little of public conflict in this country has been insurrectionary. That is, most of our public violence has taken the form of action by one group of citizens against another group, rather than a group of citizens against the state.

Political history long dominated our interpretive focus. For political historians, conflicts between groups of citizens, no matter how murderous and destructive, have been forgivable; attacks upon state power, no matter how transient and ineffective, win historical attention — and perhaps exaggeration. But in this country's history, violence against the government has been minor compared to that found in other nations. This may explain why low-key and almost charmingly benign episodes such as the Boston Tea Party always find a place in our histories; other episodes, often of startling savagery, like the suppression of the slave revolt in New York in 1712 or the anti-Chinese riot in Los Angeles in 1871, do not appear.

In American history, conflict and violence have also been too various, diffuse and spontaneous to be interpreted by any one perspective. They have been committed by isolated individuals, by small groups and by large mobs; they are directed against individuals and crowds alike; they are undertaken for a variety of purposes (and at times for no discernible rational purpose at all) and in a variety of ways ranging from assassinations, murders and lynchings, to duels, brawls, feuds and riots; they stem from criminal intent and from political idealism, from antagonisms that are entirely personal and from antagonisms of large social consequence.

My interest here is basically *domestic* conflict and violence in American history museum interpretation. I have not forgotten that war is by far the most pernicious form of conflict and the most destructive of all forms of violence. I am aware that historical military sites (many of them devoted to the interpretation of warfare) are the most abundant of all historic sites in the United States. But I have excluded discussion of this extremely important museum type for two reasons. First, the topic of conflict and violence in military museum interpretation deserves a separate and more extended treatment; second, military sites and structures are already everywhere to be seen on the museum landscape; they need no new advocate, since military history has long been a traditional strand of American history.

My brief here is simply that many (nonmilitary) history museums need to review and, where the historical evidence merits it, revise their interpretations so that their visitors come to understand the legacy of domestic turbulence and violent conflict that Richard Maxwell Brown has described as "the dark side of the American tradition." I have used gerunds in my essay's title to emphasize this imperative. I wish to have us "do" violence and "cause" conflict where they are historically appropriate in our interpretations; I want us to explore more carefully their causes and, in turn, what they cause. In short, I believe conflict and its most tangible physical manifestation — violence — deserve our attention as possible explanatory factors in our attempt to understand the various meanings of the American past.

The historical forms of domestic conflict and violence in America are many. Our past includes both personal violence (the 1804 Hamilton-Burr duel or the 1881 gunfight at the O.K. Corral) and group conflict (the 1921 Tulsa race riot or the 1887 Louisiana sugar strike). There are numerous instances of political conflict (Bleeding Kansas in the 1850s) and economic conflict (New Jersey tenant riots of 1745-54). Racial violence has included slave revolts and their suppression (Nat Turner in 1831), race riots (East St. Louis in 1917) and ghetto riots (Watts in 1965). Our past has had religious and ethnic conflict (Philadelphia nativist riots in 1844 or the New Orleans anti-Italian riot in 1891) as well as antiradical and police violence (Centralia, Washington, in 1919 or the Dearborn massacre in 1932). Finally, we

have had violence in the name of law, order and morality (the San Francisco vigilance committee of 1856 or the infamous Paris, Texas, lynching in 1893).

How might museums interpret such chaos and conflict? Are there any particular and perennial conflicts inimical to certain types of museum interpretive formats? What might we do to infuse our exhibitions with the tension, contention, passion and, where the historical record warrants it, violence that our understanding of a certain period, place or personality demands?

Why not, for instance, consider the period room as one possible museum setting for the interpretation of conflict. Courtrooms, such as the one built for Saint Joseph County in 1854 and now part of the Northern Indiana Historical Society, while ostensibly designed to adjudicate conflict, were also places of violent harangue and bitter discord. Do we usually interpret them so? City council chambers and state legislatures, like the one preserved in the old State Capitol in Iowa City, were frequently alive with acrimonious debate, political in-fighting, personal contention and strong passions. We usually interpret them as hallowed halls of statesmanship and civic virtue. Jail cells or prison blocks can be found in various museum settings, but do we ever seriously interpret the assorted human behavior — other than a few remarks about a notorious gangster or Western bank robber who may once have been incarcerated there—that took place within their confines day after day?

Police stations, as the precinct headquarters of "Hill Street Blues" attests, are theaters of continual human conflict and crisis. Historians such as Sidney Harring know that such has always been the case in most American cities. As Harring's provocative study, *Policing a Class Society,* suggests, the police station and its ancillary artifacts — the patrol wagon, signal system and squad car — have been extremely significant facets of late 19th- and early 20th-century American urban history. Yet how many police museums do we have in America, say, in comparison with firehouse museums?

Typical American historic house museums usually do not suggest to visitors any of the conflicts that may have raged around their dining room tables, not to mention in their kitchens or bedrooms. While much domestic discord is trivial, some of it can be extremely consequential to family history and, therefore, to the museum interpretation of family history.

Take, for example, the classic house-barn conflict evident in the material culture of many American farmsteads. Family arguments between husbands and wives often erupted over which site deserved the family's financial priorities: a new tractor or a new kitchen stove; painting the corn crib or wallpapering the front parlor. The size of most American barns (especially when compared to their European counterparts) and the machinery in and around such structures, when compared to a site's farmhouse and its household furnishings, may reflect some such domestic tensions.

House museums, where their histories demand it, might also reveal the marital conflicts of their former occupants such as suggested by one spouse's insistence on separate bedrooms. Sibling rivalry might be shown in the

Visitors to Colonial Williamsburg meet "real" 18th-century characters and talk with them as part of the open air museum's Living History program. Here, Harvey Credle enacts the plight of the indentured servant locked in the Gaol's pillory.

special decor and toys given one child and not another. If we know there to have been child or spouse mistreatment, alcohol or drug abuse (more widespread among 19th-century middle-class Americans than we once realized) or prolonged illness that, in turn, strongly affected life as lived in the historic house, we need to explore how best to interpret such manifestations of what social historian Gary Nash calls "the private side of American history."

Social historians, understandably, urge us to pay attention to past behavior during the especially traumatic moments of the life cycle — birth, puberty, marriage, prolonged illness, death. Until the 20th century, most of these events took place at home. Many also produced conflict, some even violence. Occasionally a historic house will be interpreted as the site of a marriage, but I have yet to see a parlor exhibited, on even a temporary basis, as a funeral site. All that we are learning, for example, about 19th-century funerary art, artifacts and activities ought to be applied to the interpretation of a historic site where death is a crucial factor in its social history. And, when conflict surrounds a death in the family in the form of will contests or inheritance disputes over the division of household goods, lands and perhaps the house itself, we need to consider the proper interpretive devices to depict this internal (possibly factious) history of the place and its people.

Suicide and murder are also the untold story of some American historic houses. If a violent death occurred in such a house, it is usually either sensationalized or ignored. No adequate explanation is given of its specific historical context or its place in the historical patterns of personal mortality of the time. Not that such interpretation is easy. How, for example, should the curators of the Vachel Lindsay House in Springfield, Illinois, interpret the poet's suicide? Shortly after drinking Lysol, Lindsay decided he had made a grievous mistake and did not want to take his own life. His violent death — crawling up stairs on hands and knees, running through the second-floor hallway in agony and anguish — is a poignant, if painful, part of his (and his homestead's) biography.

The family blood feud is a final manifestation of American domestic violence. The feud appears dramatically in Kentucky and West Virginia as well as in Central Texas and New Mexico in the era between the Civil War and World War I. This is the period that produced the famous Hatfield-McCoy feud (1873-88) of the Kentucky-West Virginia border as well as the Sutton-Taylor conflicts (1869-77) of DeWitt and other counties in Texas, and the Pleasant Valley War between the Graham and Tewksbury families in Arizona from 1886 to 1892. Of course, these are only the nation's most notorious and deadly feuds. Anyone familiar with the country's local history knows it to be filled with similar antagonisms, vendettas, bitterness and, on occasion, violence to both person and property. We have yet to tell this part of our familial and communal history in its proper perspective.

Our regional history museums still need to explore historical phenomena such as lynching and vigilantism. Although this is especially the case for museums that interpret the post-Civil War South, Southwest and parts of the West, there are only four states — Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Hampshire and Vermont — that have never had a lynching. Lynching and vigilantism have so few parallels or equivalents elsewhere that political scientists and historians tend to regard them as distinctively American institutions. Incomplete records show more than 4,950 lynchings in this country from 1882 to 1927. Many more were attempted but stopped. During the 19th century a significant minority of lynching victims were white; after the turn of the century, almost all were black. Is this story told in a representative and analytical format in our museum exhibits?

Vigilantism, argues Brown in *Strain of Violence*, also appears to be native to America. Brown suggests there are at least two major types of vigilantism. Both, however, operate on the premise that groups can be formed to create and enforce (by violence, if necessary) laws of their own interpretation (or making) in the supposed absence of adequate law enforcement. The first type of American vigilantism — usually a specific concern with the classic frontier problems of horse thieves and counterfeiters — is usually found in regional museum interpretations where the vigilantes are more often than not portrayed as local heroes. One finds the second form of vigilantism less frequently in museum interpretations, although it is one of much greater historical consequence than the first. This new vigilantism, a symptom of the growing pains of the post-Civil War era, broadened its scope to include a variety of antagonisms connected with the tensions of industrial and urban America, particularly prejudice and violence against Catholics, Jews, blacks, immigrants, laboring men and labor leaders, political radicals, advocates of civil liberties and nonconformists in general. Representatives of this new vigilantism would include groups such as the Night Riders, White Cappers, Bald Knobbers and, of course, the Ku Klux Klan — organizations more often than not left out of historical exhibits.

If a violent death occurred in a historic house, it is usually either sensationalized or ignored. No adequate explanation is given of its specific historical context or its place in the historical patterns of personal mortality of the time. Not that such interpretation is easy.

Urban museums have likewise often neglected the scale and significance of riots in the history of American cities. Civil War battles are reenacted with painstaking precision,

The installation of Where Two Worlds Meet *at the Minnesota Historical Society in St. Paul explores the cultural conflict inevitable in the 17th-century French and Indian fur trade. At right,* Indians Bartering *(1842), a lithograph based on an oil painting by Coke Smyth, depicts a European trader trying to convince Indian family members that they need his cloth, guns, knives and other wares.*

but we seldom consider restaging the massive Civil War draft resistance riots that raged for three days in New York City in 1863. Nor do we usually portray any one of 35 major riots that occurred in Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York and Boston from 1830 to 1850 or any one of the 22 major interracial riots in American cities during the four years between 1915 and 1919. The modern urban police force (the history of which, I maintain, is shockingly ignored by most city museums and historical societies) was created in response to the sustained urban rioting prior to the Civil War, as the National Guard system of arsenals was established in reaction to the uprisings of the postwar decades.

Violent American group conflict has by no means been restricted to the urban sector, with its manifold racial, ethnic and economic antagonisms. The countryside, too, has been the domain of relentless violence growing out of our agrarian history. Yet how many living history farms are populated with residents that might have participated in the Whiskey Rebellion in western Pennsylvania in the 18th century, the Farmers' Alliance in Texas in the 19th century or the Farmers' Holiday Association in the Midwest in the 20th century? How many Grangers, Greenbackers or populists do we encounter in a typical American museum of our rural past?

The labor movement in American history—like that of the farmers—reveals some of the same mixture of noble ends and violent means. It has been better documented, however, than other forms of large-scale group conflict. We recognize the impact, for example, of the Haymarket riot in Chicago, the Homestead strike in Pittsburgh or the Ludlow massacre in Colorado. The latter conflict in 1914 concluded what has been called Colorado's Thirty Years War (1884-1914) of strikes and violence that typified the economic, class and ethnic tensions of what many historians see as the most violent era in American labor history.

Site markers are the interpretive strategies to which we most frequently resort in order to designate the historical importance of a riot, civil disturbance or other form of conflict. Sometimes, as at Chicago's Near West Side Haymarket, a historical monument is erected. The policeman statue at the Chicago Haymarket site has, over the years, itself precipitated further conflict as radicals have sought to destroy and replace it with their own version of the past; the establishment, in turn, has continually rebuilt the monument in an effort to have its view of history prevail. Thus a historical marker of a violent 19th-century urban conflict has also become something of an outdoor living history museum of 20th-century urban conflict.

Much of Chicago's other violent past, however, goes largely undocumented and uninterpreted. To be sure, the St. Valentine's Day massacre and other gangster exploits are included in museum interpretations, but there is little mention of the chaos of the 1877 railroad strike in the city, the Pullman strike of 1894, the bloody race riots of 1919 and 1967, the eviction riot of 1931, the Memorial Day massacre of 1937 or the battle of Balboa Drive in 1968.

What might we do to overcome our common neglect of conflict and violence in American history museum practice? I would like to suggest three general ways whereby we might attempt to be more cognizant of this factor in the past and better communicate its role and relevancy to our

At the Old Cowtown Museum in Wichita, Kansas, history comes alive every weekend in the summer with volunteer actors and actresses who improvise life as it could have been in 1876, the year that the banks failed in Wichita. Visitors to the museum can observe, from top left clockwise: The real estate agent has a tough time convincing his prospects that Wichita is a conservative, quiet community "on the grow"; to most people, it is a risky, rowdy railhead. The farm widow complains long and loud about women not having the vote and not being able to protect themselves from the mortgage banker and the county assessor. Cowboys and drifters could always find a friendly welcome from dance hall girls, but neither the cowboy nor the saloon girl was welcomed by the proper society of Wichita. The trail boss warns his young cowpoke about the dangers of women, gambling and barber shops: "Next thing, you'll be wanting someone to shave you every day, for money." Mrs. Thornton has harassed Mr. Wilson, the bank teller, out of the barber shop to find out the truth about rumors of the bank failing: "How safe, Mr. Wilson, is my $72.36?!!"

visitors in the present. I would, therefore, recommend we, first, do more reading in the current historical scholarship on American conflict; second, be appreciative (and imitative) of contemporary museum exhibits that successfully deal with violence and conflict; and, third, experiment with techniques of reenacting past group behavior.

First, I would recommend several studies on the topic that should be in every museum historian's reference library. They would include Hugh D. Graham and Ted R. Gurr, *Violence in America;* Norman S. Cohen, *Civil Strife in America;* and Bernard Sterusher, *Consensus, Conflict, and American Historians.* In addition to this professional literature, we need, periodically, to "reread" whatever historical time period, topical interest or geographical area we are responsible for interpreting. Such a critical review should be done with an eye particularly attentive to aspects of our interpretation where we may have either overlooked or underemphasized the historical role that domestic violence and civil conflict may have played in promoting or hindering change. Here, too, we need to be especially careful to be as precise as possible in communicating what we know about violence in a certain historical era. This means watching our words when labeling: how, for example, should we distinguish between a rebellion, a riot and a revolution? This also means trying to interpret both quantitative (e.g., number of participants, duration of incidents, casualties) and qualitative (e.g., emotional impact on participants, reaction of bystanders, historical legacy) dimensions of violent conflict.

Several history museums are already striving for well-researched interpretations where conflict and violence are integral to the human behavior they are trying to understand in historical terms. They deserve our applause and imitation. The Allen County-Fort Wayne Historical Society in Indiana recently faced squarely the issue of how to exhibit the impact of the Ku Klux Klan in a northern Midwestern city in the 1920s. The Minnesota Historical Society's *Where Two Worlds Meet* grapples with the cultural conflict inevitable in the 17th-century French and Indian fur trade.

Other museums promise to deal with the conflict-violence issue in future exhibitions. The Department of Social and Cultural History at the National Museum of American History intends to make conflict, along with the themes of everyday life and diversity, a central interpretive skein of its new *After the Revolution* installation due to open in 1985. The curators intend to depict the rapidity and ubiquity of change in an era (1780-1800) that most of the American public now regards as static, almost mythic. Persuaded that all change involves conflict, the museum historians researching and presenting this exhibit hope to show how "fundamental transformations in family dynamics and living spaces, in patterns of work and consumption, and in how communities organized themselves characterized this time."

The Dallas County Historical Commission recently established the Dallas County Historical Foundation to seek ways to convert the sixth floor of the Dallas County Administration Building (formerly the Texas School Book Depository) into a historical exhibit area. To interpret the events surrounding the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963 and the official and unofficial investigations of perhaps the most controversial act of political violence in our contemporary history is an interpretive challenge indeed. It is, however, the kind of museological problem that museum historians with research stamina and methodological verve should welcome.

In our concern to understand and depict conflict and violence in the past, I think we should also be receptive to the attempts being made by various museum research staffs to engage visitors in role playing, simulations, first-person interpretation and historical dramatizations. None of these techniques are new. Museums such as Colonial Williamsburg, the Old Cowtown Museum in Wichita, Kansas, and the Tryon Palace in New Bern, North Carolina, have been doing what is often called "theatrical living history" for several years now. Using techniques derived from the theater and scripts well grounded in historical fact, this approach seems especially promising for including conflict and violence in interpretive strategies.

Interpreting past conflict... may help provide visitors with some sense of one of conflict's truest terrors: the uncertainty of its outcome. We historians tend to forget that we usually know what happened in the past, even though we may be unclear as to why it happened.

First-person interpretation can, of course, be a powerful way to dramatize what an individual may have felt in a certain historical context. You can invoke the terror of being part of a lynching mob or a near victim of a race riot. You can relate your life outside the law as an 18th-century runaway indentured servant, as actor Harvey Credle has done at Colonial Williamsburg. In order to keep your audience with you as you attempt to relive the conflict and violence of past experience, you can "break character" (using your 20th-century persona to provide introductions and conclusions that explain what is going on) in your interpretation of your historical existence as a caustic abolitionist agitator in Kansas, as a religious sister in the Ursuline convent in Charlestown, Massachusetts, when it was sacked and burned by a mob of laborers, or as a Detroit policeman at the Dearborn Ford plant confrontations in 1932.

Interpreting past conflict in this intimate way may help provide visitors with some sense of one of conflict's truest

terrors: the uncertainty of its outcome. We historians tend to forget that we usually know what happened in the past, even though we may be unclear as to why it happened. We know, for instance, who was killed in the Hamilton-Burr duel in 1804. The participants, at the time of that conflict, did not know who would die or be wounded.

The unknown continually lurks around all the corners of past human conflict. Will the county court rule against my claim contesting my brother's inheritance of the family homestead? Will I be the victim of vigilante racial violence? Should I join my union's protest march? What might happen if I do? If I don't?

With larger settings and added characters, museums can perform something akin to what historian Rhys Isaac, in *The Transformation of Virginia*, calls "historical dramaturgy." The concept of dramaturgy recognizes that each culture and subculture has its own settings, props, costumes, roles, script formulas and conflicts. The role of the historian is to recreate such dramas. The model of the theater is often an excellent vehicle, especially if the historical facts demand a portrayal of persons or forces in strong opposition. In such a context, we might more vividly and more accurately communicate our historical understanding of group conflicts such as Indian-white confrontations, ethnic rivalries, religious vendettas, clan feuds, urban riots, agrarian uprisings and labor versus industry struggles.

Such museum interpretations of conflict and violence may provoke some conflict (but I hope no violence) among visitors and boards of trustees. The experience of those who have ventured into interpreting these difficult themes, however, has not been overly distressing and is often quite the opposite. People are much taken with the museum's candor and courage, despite the fact that the subject matter being presented may have been disturbing, even disgusting.

History is consensus and conflict, virtue and violence.... To some aspects of our past and to some of our history museum exhibits, thoughtful silence, inquisitive anxiety or a quiet cry might be the most appropriate modes of response.

I realize that many museum historians, while they may concur in my critique of our previous treatment of conflict and violence, will not agree with my conclusions that we should think of history museums as places of emotion as well as entertainment. I would simply answer that history museums, like human history itself, must be engaging repositories of past anguish and anxiety as well as happy storehouses of memories and expectations if the complexity of past experience is to be faithfully served and honestly presented.

Using the theater metaphor a final time, let me say that visitors deserve some warning about the past they are going to see interpreted, just as they do when they attend a musical, an opera or an off-Broadway play. Occasionally we may have to warn them that what they are about to see is violent, depressing and recommended only for mature audiences.

History is consensus and conflict, virtue and violence. We need not, as the line of an old vaudeville refrain admonishes, "Always leave 'em laughing." To some aspects of our past and to some of our history museum exhibits, thoughtful silence, inquisitive anxiety or a quiet cry might be the most appropriate modes of response. In addition to presenting a view of American history that has its parallel in Busby Berkeley musical extravaganzas and Neil Simon Broadway comedies, museums also need to depict, where appropriate, a perspective on the past analogous to the poignant American dramas of Tennessee Williams and Eugene O'Neill. Δ

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Museums and the Public Interest

Annie Searle

Where public relations practitioners participate in organizational decisions, they carry a heavy ethical responsibility. Their responsibilities are not only to themselves and their organizations, but to their profession and to the public as well. All these considerations must be weighed when helping to make organizational decisions and in communicating those decisions once made.

—Otis Baskin and Craig Aronoff, *Public Relations: The Profession and the Practice,* 1983

The governing body of a museum, usually a board of trustees, serves the public interest as it relates to the museum, and must consider itself accountable to the public as well as to the institution. In most cases the board acts as the ultimate legal entity for the museum, and stands responsible for the formulation and maintenance of its general policies, standards, condition and operational continuity.... Trustees should maintain in confidence information learned during the course of their museum activities when that information concerns the administration or activities of the museum and is not generally available to the public. This principle does not preclude public disclosure of information that is properly in the public domain, or information that should be released in fulfilling the institution's accountability to the public.

—*Museum Ethics,* 1978

Public relations is a two-way process: carrying a message and receiving and evaluating the responses from the museum's publics. It is a planned effort. It ought to be socially responsible. Public relations is much more than publicity. The field embraces or involves at least community relations, government and public affairs, opinion research, marketing, lobbying, advertising, publications, some knowledge of graphics, film, video, audio and photography, issues management, internal communications and the skills of management.

—Larry Morrison, "Public Relations and Public Image," *Museum News,* February 1979

The practice of public affairs begins with the premise that the public has a right to use museums, to know how museums operate, to know what decisions are reached when they have an impact upon the public and to know what the basis for the decision was. It also presumes that the public is, indeed, interested in museums.

This is not just simple faith in the First Amendment rights of the press. It does represent, however, a Jeffersonian confidence in the enduring nature of our public institutions. At the same time it is the assumption all of us must work from if we have faith in the value of our museums and what they can mean to the public over the long term.

It is the public affairs professional who acts as a bridge or liaison between the media and the museum on a daily

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basis, in order that the public and the public interest be served. This is the same professional who explains consistently — despite changes in staff or issues at any point in time — what the museum is, what the museum does and what the museum offers to the public. Those of us who run such offices make implicit choices and selections on a daily basis. We counsel directors and trustees alike in the rocky terrain of issues management and public disclosure of good news and/or bad news. Our own professional credibility is tested over and over again with the media as our museums carry out their respective mandates.

For many museums, the emergence from a private, club-like citadel to a public institution has been so traumatic as to set to one side the issue of disclosure until a severe crisis arises that has rather directly to do with those growing pains. Unfortunately, some museum leaders are so used to thinking of their public affairs staff as "promoters" or "flaks" — responsible for generating substantial amounts of press coverage for events and activities of the museum— that a valuable staff resource may be overlooked in time of crisis. And, in the absence of a clear set of policies and procedures for public disclosure, it is all too easy for museums to borrow well-practiced models of evasion from the private sector, where disclosure is often avoided. That is, in the absence of a coherent definition of disclosure, museums can inadvertently misjudge the importance of a given issue. What should have been a rather matter-of-fact handling of an issue begins to assume gargantuan proportions as a reporter becomes an investigator in search of material that might have been considered public information in the first place.

What kinds of situations are we talking about? If a museum is actively seeking disclosure through the media, then generally it is disclosing "good news" that will en-

hance its image: new and important acquisitions, major gifts to the annual operating budget or the layered announcement of gifts toward a previously established capital campaign goal.*

Examples of "bad news," where a member of the press may force defensive disclosure upon the museum, could include budget deficits, the deaccessioning of objects in a museum collection, the nonprofit status of a museum in light of activities it may undertake, the conditions under which a museum stores its collections, the appearance of a conflict of interest where a staff member or trustee is concerned, the security of objects in a museum and the donor/dealer issue where acquisition programs for the collection are concerned.

Our communications and the images we create not only inform and persuade; they influence as well. Our standards of professional behavior can strengthen or weaken behavioral norms. Our ethics as practitioners are complicated by the "middle man" dilemma. Probably more than any other profession, we hold special our obligation to serve the interests of our employers and clients, many of whom often think and act contrary to the public interest.

—Don Bates, "Are Practitioners Lazy When It Comes to Ethics?" *Public Relations Journal,* March 1984

If the museum looks to the public for its audience and a portion of its funding, then its public affairs office is engaged in consciously shaping positive public opinion and attitudes. Why? Because museums are indeed "the custodians of a substantial part of humankind's heritage, whether produced by the skill of our ancestors or by our contemporaries," as the 96th Congress put it in the enabling legislation for National Museum Day. As repositories for cultural values, museums operate on behalf of the public, holding artifacts or specimens in trust for generations that follow. If we accept such a definition for a museum, then we must conclude that such institutions are no longer the province solely of those who enjoy wealth and power. A museum is subject to examination and public scrutiny in the same manner as we would examine, for instance, our legislatures, our libraries and our schools. Decisions that trustees make frequently affect not only the institution but the quality of life for the citizens of the region as well. Good public affairs work depends upon the presentation of plausible positive and negative consequences so that museum leaders can make the best possible decision at any given time. Along with consequences, the trustees will want to understand possible implications of their decisions from a political or strategic perspective, especially when the decisions will be of great interest to the public.

In order to continue to provide the very best counsel to museum governors, it has been useful here in Seattle to establish a museum internship program in public affairs as a means by which professionals can re-engage the issues and re-ask the questions from a perspective that is enlivened by the eagerness of the student. More than 30 students from such diverse fields of study as communications, political science, business, art history, English, theater, arts administration and marketing have enriched the Seattle Art Museum's Public Affairs Division since 1978. Integrated carefully into the theory and practice of public affairs are the ethical questions and hypothetical dilemmas that call upon one's expertise and test whether or not judgments are flexible. The program has always rewarded me in that it satisfies most of my instincts to teach and to learn. The challenge is always to see whether or not it is possible to demonstrate for interns the challenge of diplomacy and the practice of advocacy toward what Edward L. Bernays would have called the engineering of public consent. After all is said and done, most interns leave this program understanding a fundamental principle: the practice of public affairs is based upon a commitment to telling rather than concealing the truth, even as we interpret the museum and the public to one another.

Usually, one finds information about the museum's public programs in news releases, public service announcements, newsletters and press preview events. Such materials are prepared by the public affairs office. But a good portion of public affairs work is done without pieces of paper, official museum statements to recite or even museum officials in front of the microphone or camera. This zone in which the experienced public affairs professional works in moments of controversy and crisis may not be describable, except to say that it is filled with instances where the professional keeps a clear head, invokes instant recall and retains a clear picture of where the line between inaccurate or premature speculation and true but unreleasable facts occurs. In such instances, the museum vests the confidence and trust of its governors in the public affairs professional and his or her judgment. Great damage to the museum's integrity can occur if this trust is abused.

As repositories for cultural values, museums operate on behalf of the public, holding artifacts or specimens in trust for generations that follow.

If we take real or hypothetical examples where museums or their leaders have ended up splatted across

*For the best writing of its kind, I recommend the exceedingly lucid press releases of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, especially in the area of major gifts of works of art and funds for expansion, where the plan and use for the gift are always made part of the announcement itself.

newspapers (or in court), then we can usually assume that the public affairs staff was excluded from deliberations or any knowledge of unethical activity. Though "I just didn't know it was going on" is hardly a compelling rationalization, there are examples that come to mind—both inside and outside the museum — where the exclusion of the public affairs staff has meant even greater damage to the integrity of the museum.

A favorite hypothetical situation that allows interns to test their skills and explore the ethical parameters of disclosure for the museum: staff from CBS-TV's "60 Minutes" calls to say they'd like to interview someone from your museum and shoot some film inside the museum next Tuesday. They're working on a story about how museum collections develop and grow over time, and your museum has been selected as one of three to examine. Since you saw Mike Wallace's piece on art theft several years ago, you know that it's important to be prepared for

In that we represent both the public and the museum's interest at the same time, the public affairs office function sits squarely at the heart of the integrity of the museum.

hard questions and, at the same time, to present as clear a picture of your museum's acquisitions policy as possible in a limited amount of time. How will you proceed? What kind of briefing is appropriate for your spokesperson? Can you determine through research why your museum was selected? Who will you offer up to the indefatigable Mike Wallace?

The public affairs function implies action and invites well-thought-out positions from the museum, but particularly from the professional who becomes responsible for moving those positions through internal and external channels. In that we represent both the public and the museum's interest at the same time, the public affairs office function sits squarely at the heart of the integrity of the museum. Evasion and duplicity are tools of flawed institutions that, even as they become more unresponsive to the public interest, face ultimate decay. The lessons of Watergate — together with instances within our own profession where deceit or the appearance of such has damaged all institutions called museums — can serve to provide us with a set of operating principles concerning controversy and disclosure:

1. There is never any situation in which "No comment" is the appropriate response. There is always a way to say something and to respect the question itself, even if it is only to say, "We don't know yet. We'll let you know when we do."

2. An open-handed approach to the media will take the institution farther in the long run, especially if the museum is looking for public visibility and support. The term "stonewall" simply is not part of the vocabulary of a healthy museum. Every museum works differently, and legal counsel can most easily indicate to staff and trustees which kinds of information fall into the public domain. Similarly, most museums now have legally binding policies and procedures where their collections are concerned, which, together with the AAM accreditation process, provide clear guidance for decision making. There are always situtations in which the media are excluded from the making of a decision and perhaps from the decision itself. At my own institution, the media have come to learn that such situations include consideration of real estate, contracts or other legal agreements as well as passage of the annual operating budget. Board meetings that include such agenda items — or the consideration of the cost of an acquisition to the collection, for example—are closed to the media, even though a museum official usually will oblige the media following the board meeting to the extent that it is possible to say something courteous. Additionally, the media are also provided every year with an invitation to cover the museum's annual meeting and a copy of our annual report that contains an audited financial statement. In these ways, the museum welcomes the coverage it receives each year outside the arts pages of the newspaper, particularly when such coverage helps the general public to understand better the museum's operation and direction.

3. There is no such thing as "off the record." Both trustees and staff should be oriented by the public affairs office to understand how to deal with the media. All too often museums assume that, because there are channels established for media inquiry and response, other staff and trustees will be immune from such inquiry in nonofficial situations. Nothing could be further from the truth. Staff and trustees often find themselves mingling with members of the press in social contexts, and it is here that the most unhealthy forms of disclosure take place. Personal opinion and frustration often take the place of sound professional judgment. Eager to sound knowledgeable among their peers, members of the museum community provide the media with strong leads for subsequent articles, especially where bad news is concerned and when confidential information is being discussed. Such "off the record" speculation in a nonmuseum context damages both the institution and the reputation of the tale-teller. Once you have shown yourself to be a good source, reporters will come back to you for more "informed source" material on other issues. Eventually, your role in stories that damage the institution will be known.

Stated most obliquely, the practice of public affairs involves complex transactions in human inquiry. Since we hold works in public trust through time and space, is it any wonder that the public should be interested in how we accomplish this lofty sounding goal? The rationale for our

work springs from the same source as the museum visitor's. And the reporter's. In his 1975 anthology *On Understanding Art Museums,* Sherman Lee included a compelling essay by Robert Coles that lets us hear some of the perceptions of museums held by individuals who were in therapy with Coles. Concluding his essay, Coles speculates upon the process of inquiry.

> I would be the last one to discourage further efforts to open wide museum doors, stretch the hours, reach a larger public than heretofore.... What Renoir tried to clarify (for himself and others) about the world he watched is not unlike what a ghetto child or factory worker or white collar worker wants (maybe it is a matter of secret craving) to clarify for himself—in Kierkegaard's words: "the meaning of life, or the nature of things—and an inquiry into either is often killed in the academy, but may be carried on from day to day by any one of us, no matter who we are."

The code of ethics that follows is at once an affirmation of the fact of human inquiry and a means by which we can understand and agree upon ethical conduct. Together with *Museum Ethics,* it gathers our beliefs and principles of action. Though there are those who would argue that such codes are useless because they are unenforceable, I would argue that they become the ultimate form of public disclosure: they provide us with the means by which we can imagine our institutions long after we have left them.

A Code of Ethics for Public Relations

Declaration of Principles

Members of the AAM Committee on Public Relations and Communications base their professional principles and practices upon the fundamental value and dignity of a work of art and/or artifact; and hold that the free exercise of human rights, especially freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and freedom of the press, is essential to the practice of public relations and communications.

We accept and reaffirm the language of the 96th Congress, which established National Museum Day in 1979:

> Museums are the custodians of a substantial part of humankind's heritage, whether produced by the skill of our ancestors or by our contemporaries.
> Museums are centers of research for scholars, of education and enlightenment for younger generations, and a source of enjoyment and cultural enhancement for all.
> Museums enrich the quality of our communities and provide a sense of continuity and perspective which can enhance, in a unique way, the cultural opportunities which are provided by schools, colleges, libraries and other institutions of learning.

In serving the interests of museums, we dedicate ourselves to the goals of better communication, understanding and cooperation among the diverse individuals, groups and institutions of society; and of equal opportunity of employment in the public relations and communications field.

We pledge:

> To conduct ourselves professionally, with truth, accuracy, fairness and responsibility to our museums and the public;
>
> To uphold the principles of this code and ensure, as far as possible, that they are not violated by the acts of ourselves or of others;
>
> To adhere to the articles of the Code of Ethics adopted by the American Association of Museums in 1978.

The first draft of this code was prepared by Annie Searle, chairman of the Task Force on a Code of Ethics of the AAM Committee on Public Relations and Communications. It was subsequently revised in 1982 in accordance with recommendations from other members of the task force.The code was published in *Update,* the committee's newsletter, in April 1983. It was then presented to members at the 1983 business meeting of the Committee on Public Relations and Communications for preliminary approval. It was approved and is in effect as of the business meeting of the committee on June 14, 1984. Members of the Ethics Task Force are: Sandra Gilbert, American Federation of Arts, New York; Chris Helms, Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, Tucson; Pru Hutching, La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art; Sidney Lawrence, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; and Gail Madyun, San Diego Historical Society.

Articles of the Code

1. A member shall adhere to truth and accuracy and to generally accepted standards of good taste in providing the media and/or the public with descriptions of museum collections, exhibited material or programs. All professional actions of the member shall be guided by unswerving respect for the esthetic, historical and physical integrity of the artifact.

2. A member shall deal fairly with museum employers, past and present; with his or her professional colleagues and supporting staff; with members of print and broadcast media; and with the public.

3. A member shall conduct his or her professional life in accord with the public interest, defined here primarily as comprising respect for and enforcement of the rights guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States of America.

4. A member shall not represent conflicting or competing interests without the expressed consent of those involved, given full disclosure of the facts; nor place himself or herself in a position where the member's interest is or may be in conflict with a duty to the museum without full disclosure of such interests to all involved.

5. A member shall not engage in any practice that tends to corrupt the integrity of channels of communication or the processes of government. Practices prohibited are those that tend to place representatives of the media or government under an obligation to the member or the museum, practices which are in conflict with their own professional obligations, such as:

a. the giving of gifts of more than a nominal value;

b. any form of payment or compensation to a member of the media used to obtain preferential or guaranteed news or editorial coverage;

c. any retainer, fee or use of the museum services to a media employee when the circumstances are not fully disclosed to and accepted by the media employer and the museum;

d. use of the services of a media employee by other departments within the museum when the circumstances are not fully disclosed to and accepted by the media employer;

e. providing trips for media representatives that are unrelated to legitimate news interest;

f. the use of an investment, loan or advertising commitment made by the member or the museum itself to obtain preferential or guaranteed editorial coverage.

(This article of the code does not prohibit hosting media or government representatives at meals, cocktails or news functions, special events that are occasions for the exchange of information or views, or the furtherance of understanding that is part of the public relations function. Nor does it prohibit the bona fide press event or tour when government representatives are given an opportunity for on-the-spot viewing of a museum exhibition, process or event in which they have a legitimate interest. What is customary or reasonable hospitality has to be a matter of particular judgment in specific situations. In all of these cases, however, it should be understood that no preferential treatment or guarantees are expected or implied; and that complete independence is always left to the media representative, who ultimately always decides what is newsworthy.)

6. A member shall not intentionally communicate false or misleading information; and is always obligated to use care to avoid communication of false or misleading information.

7. In the practice of public affairs for the museum, the member shall adhere to the general policy of making full and timely disclosure of public information. The information disclosed shall be accurate, clear and understandable. The purpose of such disclosure is to present all material facts. Members shall not knowingly omit information, the omission of which could make other statements false and misleading. Under no circumstances shall members participate in any activity designed to mislead or manipulate the public issues involved in the long-term policy or direction of a museum.

8. A member shall not make use of any individual or agency purporting to serve or represent a stated cause, or purporting to be independent or unbiased, but actually serving an undisclosed special or private interest.

9. A member shall not intentionally injure the professional reputation or practice of another practitioner.

10. In performing services for the museum, a member shall not accept fees, commissions or any other valuable consideration. Exceptions to this article can be granted only with the expressed consent of the museum director, given after full disclosure of the facts.

11. A member shall not guarantee the achievement of specified results beyond the member's direct control. This article in effect prohibits misleading either museum staff or trustees about what public relations efforts can accomplish. It does not prohibit guarantees of quality or service in the production of materials that are within the member's control.

12. Members who work on a contractual basis for museums shall not improperly use their positions to encourage additional future employment or compensation. It is understood that successful campaign directors or managers may well continue to assist and counsel the museum for remuneration because of the record of performance they have previously established. Such members who work on contract shall voluntarily disclose to the museum the identity of other clients or employers with whom they are currently associated and whose interests might be favorably or unfavorably affected by their representation.

13. Any member who is required to conduct himself in a manner requiring behavior contrary to articles of the code is encouraged to report such incidents in writing to the executive director of the American Association of Museums. Δ

The Bellevue Art Museum in Bellevue Square, Bellevue, Washington, sports the look of a mall shop outside, but inside, its galleries are just like those found in a more traditionally located art museum.

Museums in the Marketplace

William R. Anderson
and
Herbert Sprouse

The late Victor Gruen, internationally known architect and planner, conceived the idea of the modern shopping center more than 30 years ago. His concept was of a suburban town center that would integrate community services, social and cultural activities, and shopping—that would, in other words, create urbanity in suburbia. Instead he witnessed the reduction of his idea into centers that he described to Neal

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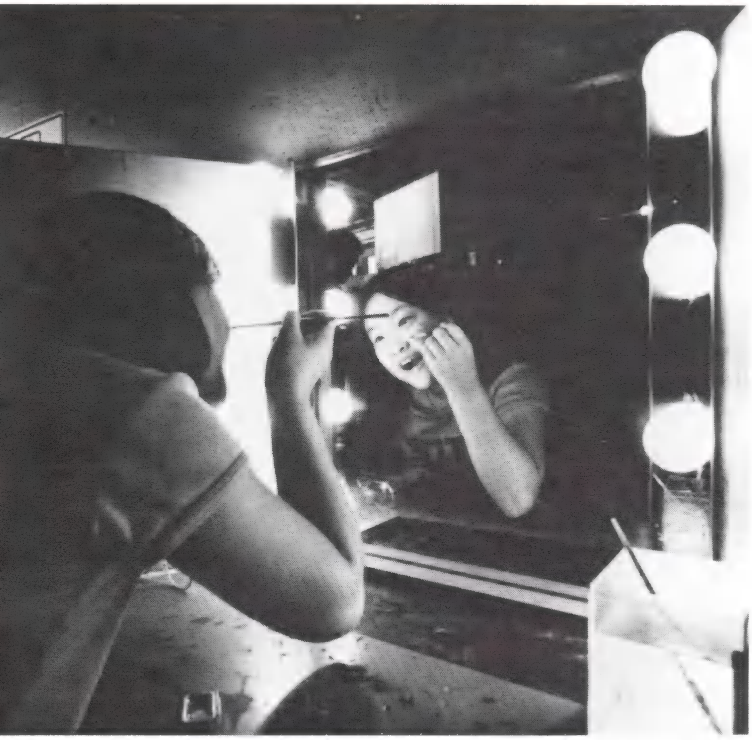
Peirce (*Washington Post*, October 22, 1978), as "just selling machines." He saw the humanities segregated into what he called "cultural centers — a concentration of theaters, museums, galleries, and exhibit halls—located in splendid isolation from those who might be persuaded to participate in culture." A few museums, however, have been true to Victor Gruen's original vision, not only exhibiting in shopping centers but in some cases actually locating in them, with administration, storage, classrooms, galleries and all in the same places where people buy clothing, gifts, food and hardware.

Cultural exhibitions are not strangers to shopping centers. The Rouse Company, developer and manager of more than 50 shopping centers, established its Art in the Marketplace program in 1977, formalizing its 20-year effort to provide funds for gallery spaces in its centers. The Franklin Institute Science Museum has had its Museum in an Urban Mall—a small satellite exhibit and demonstration area in Philadelphia's Gallery Mall at Market East — for more than five years. Some children's museums, such as the Staten Island Children's Museum and the Los Angeles Children's Museum, have branch facilities in suburban shopping malls. Perhaps the most famous branch museum in a shopping center was the Boston Museum of Fine Arts' two-year experiment, while renovating the Asiatic wing of its main building, with a 12,000-square-foot gallery above two floors of shops in Faneuil Hall Marketplace. Despite their successes at bringing art and science to the people, shopping center galleries like these have usually been temporary, sometimes experimental, and always subordinate to the main museum located in a traditional, freestanding building known to regular museum goers. These museums that dared to open branch galleries in nontraditional locations like shopping centers were usually established, well-known names in the community, able to draw a crowd without an introduction.

Some brand new museums, however, have taken "art in the marketplace" one step further and made the shopping center their permanent home. These museums — among them the American Museum of Quilts and Related Arts, formerly in the El Paseo de Saratoga shopping center, San Jose, California; the Bellevue Art Museum in Bellevue Square, Bellevue, Washington; the Los Angeles Children's Museum in the Los Angeles Mall, Los Angeles, California; and the Museum of Scientific Discovery in Strawberry Square, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania—have all faced working conditions not usually experienced by other museums. They have, in varying degrees, gained from their shopping mall locations, while contributing to the economic, as well as cultural, well-being of their respective shopping centers.



Children often go to the Los Angeles Mall just to visit their local museum. From left clockwise: Face paints give kids the chance to have the kind of face they want most; a young visitor, dressed in full fireman regalia, emerges from the sewer pipe that joins Lego and City streets, two museum exhibits; **HELP**, *the newest exhibit, is an acronym for its self-descriptive full title,* **Health Education Learning Project**. *Experimentation is child's play at the Museum of Scientific Discovery in Strawberry Square, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.*

The Advantages

Museums do not normally look for shopping center locations, and the new museums under discussion here were no exception. All four took mall locations after they were offered leases too favorable to pass up.

The American Museum of Quilts and Related Arts was founded in 1977 by the Santa Clara Valley Quilt Association. The current president of the association had an empty retail store in a small, 10-store shopping plaza in Los Altos and offered the space to the museum for free. Shortly thereafter El Paseo de Saratoga, a new specialty shopping mall, opened in San Jose. Recognizing that the quilt museum was a draw, the new shopping center offered the museum 3,300 square feet of space for four years. The space was free for the first two years, and only 10 percent of museum sales revenue the next two years. The museum decided to move into the newer, more visible mall until it could raise enough money to buy its own structure. This year, after four years in El Paseo de Saratoga, the museum bought and relocated in a 1930 Spanish-Mediterranean-style house in downtown San Jose.

Sponsored by the Pacific Northwest Arts and Crafts Association, the Bellevue Art Museum and its school were founded in 1975 and located in a building adjacent to Belle-

vue Square, a shopping center in downtown Bellevue. The owner of Bellevue Square, who was also a trustee of the Arts and Crafts Association, offered 12,000 square feet of space for a nominal $1 per year rent. Looking for space more centrally located in the mall, the museum moved into its third-floor space in the center of Bellevue Square in 1983.

The Los Angeles Children's Museum got its start after two local women approached Mayor Tom Bradley with the idea of establishing a new children's museum in space originally designated for a restaurant in the city-owned Los Angeles Mall. During a three-month trial period, the museum attracted 40,000 visitors, and so it was asked to stay. Unlike the other museums in shopping centers, the Los Angeles Children's Museum pays rent to the city for its 17,000 square feet of space, but does not pay rent for its branch in the Del Amo Fashion Center.*

The Museum of Scientific Discovery started as a pilot project of the Junior League of Harrisburg. After a successful showing in the basement of the William Penn Memorial Museum, representatives from the Harristown Development Corporation offered 10,000 square feet of space on the top floor of their new downtown shopping mall called Strawberry Square. The museum and the shopping center shared mutual interests. According to Roger Smith, director of the Museum of Scientific Discovery, "We needed space to conform with what we wanted our image to be—a clean, comfortable, safe, 'class' act; and the Harristown Development Corporation wanted to bring diversity to Strawberry Square as part of its significant urban revitalization effort." The museum has been given free space for five years, twice renewable, although it must pay pass-through costs like utilities, security and maintenance.

None of these museums was originally conceived with the idea of locating in a shopping center, but all four were attracted to free space and, as fledgling institutions, recognized the important visibility a shopping center would give them. As John Olbrantz, director of the Bellevue Art Museum, observes, "Shopping malls are becoming a place to gather — like a town square. A lot of museums are moving to where the people are."

Aside from the incontestable attractions of free space, the primary advantage of a shopping center location for a museum is exposure. Millions of people each year pass by on their way to a department store or restaurant and cannot help but notice the unusual attraction where a store should be. Some of these shoppers, many of whom are not regular museum goers, enter out of curiosity. "People just stop by and drop in," says Gloria Debs-Miyata, director of the American Museum of Quilts and Related Arts. "Many of these people are not normally exposed to arts and quilts. Frequently, people come in wanting to buy our quilts and

*As this issue went to press we received word that the Del Amo satellite gallery of the Los Angeles Children's Museum has closed. —Ed.

become confused when we tell them that we are a museum and the quilts are not for sale." About 20 percent of the quilt museum's visitors are considered "drop-ins."

The Bellevue Art Museum also experiences about a 20-30 percent drop-in rate. Nevertheless, Olbrantz cautions, "The average mall visitor comes for the specific purpose of shopping and does not think of coming into the museum." Expecting about 75,000 visitors in the first year of operations, the staff at the Museum of Scientific Discovery was disappointed that only about 60,000 people actually entered its doors, even though that number was double the attendance at its former location. Yet, says Roger Smith, director of the museum, "The advantages are significant." He highlights the mutual benefits to the shopping center and the museum. "It's a symbiotic relationship — the mall wanted people who haven't been downtown, and we wanted a high volume clientele." The Museum of Scientific Discovery is fortunate that two office towers empty 8,000 people into the mall every day. The museum has attracted more than 120,000 visitors in its two-year existence, an estimated two-thirds of them people who combine shopping with museum visits.

This notion of a "symbiotic relationship" is reiterated by Rebecca White of the Harristown Development Corporation, developer and manager of Strawberry Square. Strawberry Square was a major revitalization project for downtown Harrisburg, an area vacated after working hours and considered unsafe by most people who live in the suburbs. White feels that the Museum of Scientific Discovery "gives people living in the suburbs a reason for coming downtown on weekends." To enter the museum, visitors must walk through the mall. They cannot help but notice the other offerings of Strawberry Square. After bringing their children to the museum for its many children's programs, parents have learned that downtown is not as unsafe as they thought.

Linda Carey of El Paseo de Saratoga believes that the American Museum of Quilts and Related Arts added to the general theme of the shopping mall. As she says, "El Paseo is a specialty shopping center with comic-book stores, magic shops, craft stores, etc., and the quilt museum added to the concept." The museum attracted publicity for the mall through newspaper articles and radio spots. One year, the Santa Clara Valley Quilt Association held an international symposium on quilts that brought 400 participants into the mall. In addition, every month the association sponsored a meeting in a church near the center. Afterwards, most of the 200 association members went to the center to see the museum and, presumably, spent money in the stores once they were there.

The Los Angeles Children's Museum, however, is independent of its mall location. The five-year-old museum sits on top of the shopping mall and has a separate entrance from the street. With 13,000 square feet of exhibit space, it attracts 250,000 people per year. According to Lee Woolley, the museum's public relations officer, "The shopping center is irrelevant and not necessary for bringing people into the museum. Most people come to visit the museum specifically; they would come to us anywhere." Unlike the other museums, the Los Angeles Children's Museum is the main attraction in its mall. Although the mall's stores close on weekends (the museum's busiest period), its restaurants stay open, and, claims Woolley, "The restaurants don't want to admit how much of their business is brought by the museum, but it's the only reason some of them are open on weekends."

The Los Angeles Children's Museum also has a 3,100-square-foot satellite gallery in a former children's boutique in the Del Amo Fashion Center, a suburban regional shopping mall in Torrance, California. The satellite location is not so self-reliant. The Del Amo branch attracted 60,000 people over a six-month period, but, unlike the main museum, according to Woolley, "The Del Amo satellite has to have foot traffic. Perhaps up to 75 percent of its visitors are people who just drop in or notice it one day while shopping and decide to come back later."

Shopping centers have a seasonal business, but museums in shopping centers do not necessarily experience seasonal attendance variation to the same degree, or at the same time, as their retail neighbors. Attendance at the Museum of Scientific Discovery does not correlate with shopping seasonality. Instead, visitation correlates with school trips, which are highest in the spring. The Los Angeles Children's Museum does experience attendance increases during Christmas and late summer in both of its locations, but the museum attributes these increases more to school vacations than to the larger number of shoppers in the mall.

The Bellevue Art Museum does, however, notice a relationship between museum attendance and Bellevue Square's seasonal variation, and it tries to exploit this seasonality. The museum takes advantage of the busiest months around Christmastime by selling arts and crafts to shoppers looking for gifts. During seasonal peaks, the museum aggressively pushes membership drives. The seasonal variation experienced by the museum, however, is not proportional to the shopping mall's seasonal flux. Bellevue Square normally attracts 22,000 daily visitors, while the museum attracts 200. During the Christmas season, the mall's attendance almost doubles to 40,000 people, while the museum's visitation increases to 250.

The San Diego Art Center, a new museum venture in downtown San Diego, will develop the mall location concept further. In planning for a 1986 opening, the art center is developing a former movie theater for use as a new museum of contemporary architecture and design as well as sculpture and painting. The center's 60,000-square-foot building will be an integral part of Horton Plaza, an innovative urban shopping center featuring department stores, food and specialty retailing, all in a festival atmosphere. Looking beyond the obvious advantages of location and exposure, the art center plans to develop the lower levels of its building for lease to retail tenants, thereby increasing earned income and encouraging an even greater level of traffic at the same time.

The Differences

Visitors to shopping center museums are often not as experienced at museum going as those who visit museums in traditional locations. Ken Moffett, curator of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts' former satellite in Faneuil Hall Marketplace, noticed that "a great number of visitors had never been in a museum before. There were many business people during lunchtime, tourists who would not normally visit the main MFA building, and shoppers not frequently exposed to art." Because of the relative unsophistication of the shopping center visitor, labels were kept as simple and brief as possible. Targeted to a seventh-grade comprehension level, they were generally less educational than the main museum's labels. As Moffett observed, "Shoppers and business people during lunch hour do not want to spend a lot of time reading." He advises other museums in shopping centers "not to make the exhibitions didactic in nature, since most of the visitors impulsively come because they are interested in a visual experience rather than an academic endeavor. Let the public discover the objects visually rather than burden them with labels," he suggests; "A beautiful object will attract the ordinary person, an esoteric object, unless famous, may not."

The visitors to the Bellevue Art Museum, a large percentage of whom are first- or second-time art museum visitors, are not considered to be the same group that visits

In addition to its space in Strawberry Square, the Museum of Scientific Discovery is negotiating a lease for an adjacent store that is vacant.

the other, larger art museums in the Seattle area. Estimating that 60 percent of its visitors are regular museum goers and 40 percent are casual shoppers and first-time visitors who do not frequent museums, the Bellevue Art Museum tries to cater to both groups. The museum staff designs exhibitions for the two gallery spaces with this distinction in mind. According to Olbrantz, "To attract both groups, one exhibition presents easily digestible material, while the other exhibition tries to be on the 'cutting edge' of the museum's capabilities."

Shopping centers are places for families and children, and museums in shopping centers attract a large share of both. The Bellevue Art Museum hosts many families, and relatively few teenagers and elderly patrons. The Boston Museum of Fine Arts noticed more families in its Faneuil Hall Marketplace gallery than in its main museum. The Museum of Scientific Discovery estimates that about one-third of its visitors are adults, almost all of whom bring children. Because of its educational mission and close working relationship with local schools, it must, says Smith, "fight off myths that it is a children's museum."

Children's museums in shopping malls have been accused of being more day-care centers than museums, but

The Bellevue Art Museum store constitutes up to 10 percent of the museum's operating budget.

the Los Angeles Children's Museum, says Woolley, "has structured its programming so that parents just do not drop their children off while they shop. The Children's Museum's concept encourages parent participation and, in fact, requires parental escort."

All of the museums have a strong community orientation. The Museum of Scientific Discovery pursues school and community group attendance, and the staff performs demonstrations and organizes participatory projects such as a "Camp-in," in which Girl Scouts camp in the museum and learn about science. The American Museum of Quilts and Related Arts closed once a month for a special showing to members of the Santa Clara Valley Quilt Association. The Bellevue Art Museum specializes in regional art and has designed exhibits targeting specific constituencies in its community.

The high community visibility and the type of visitor experienced by shopping center museums clearly affect their programming and presentation. In addition, because most of the potential visitors shop in the center often, exhibits must change frequently. The Bellevue Art Museum does not have permanent displays, although it does have a permanent collection that it lends to local institutions. Instead, it specializes in temporary exhibits, showing 10 exhibitions each year, with staggered openings in two separate galleries. To encourage return visits by regular shoppers, the Museum of Scientific Discovery seeks to be dynamic, with interactive and audiovisual exhibits and demonstrations.

People in a shopping center are in a mood to shop. Consequently, museum store sales might be better in a mall location than in a traditional museum site, but the museums under consideration in this article have not yet fully explored that possibility. The Bellevue Art Museum's store constitutes one-twelfth of its space and contributes up to 10 percent of the museum's operating budget. The store sells the traditional ware of art books, reproductions and art consignments. The museum, admits Olbrantz, "hasn't fulfilled the potential for a gift shop."

Less than 100 of the Museum of Scientific Discovery's 10,000 square feet are devoted to its shop, and shop sales contribute less than 5 percent of the museum's total budget. Now that the museum is entering its third year, more attention has been given to the shop, and sales have "skyrocketed," up 150 percent over last year and nearly eight times the volume of the first year. Items range in

price from 35 cents to $5. Much of the business comes from groups and, according to Smith, "more and more from drop-ins, particularly during Christmastime, when parents are looking for things to stuff in their children's stockings." For the next fiscal year Smith has budgeted 10 percent of museum revenues from the shop, but expects about 20 percent. Recognizing the potential, he plans to expand the store.

The American Museum of Quilts and Related Arts downplayed its retail operations, fighting off the misperception that it was a quilt store by moving the retail section to the back of the museum. Still, one-third of its floor space was devoted to the museum store, where fabric, quilting supplies and gifts were sold. The shopping center management wanted the museum to sell quilts as well, but the staff refused, concerned that that would compromise its distinction as a museum. All the museum's operating budget came, however, from its retail sales revenue, which enabled it to save income from symposiums and auctions to buy its new home.

Museums in shopping centers have to deal not only with center management but with neighboring retailers as well. Generally, they find the stores compatible, but, as Woolley describes it, "Sometimes we're their best friend; sometimes we're 'that damn museum.' "

The Bellevue Art Museum has a very good relationship with the other mall tenants and is exploring cross-promotional events. Half-price museum tickets are given with purchases from selected stores. The museum also has a good working relationship with Bellevue Square architects and management, jointly arranging educational programs, concerts and art demonstrations in the center mall.

The Museum of Scientific Discovery also enjoys an amiable relationship with Strawberry Square's management and stores but notices that some store owners have mixed feelings regarding the museum's school group visitors. With 10,000 children visiting the museum in May, according to Smith, "Some tenants felt there was no control over the kids, but there were no complaints from the pizza, record and ice cream shops. The boutiques thought the kids were noisy." In response to the boutique clerks and owners who consider large groups of schoolchildren a nuisance, Smith points out, "Kids in groups come back again with their parents, which is what store owners want to see."

The stores and management of El Paseo de Saratoga were disappointed when the American Museum of Quilts and Related Arts decided to move out of the center and into the new home the museum recently purchased. "Sorry to see them go," says Carey of the shopping center's management; "We tried to provide them with alternative space and tried to encourage them to sell quilts as well, which would attract an affluent trade, but the museum wanted to be simply a museum in a historic house."

The Drawbacks

One disadvantage of a shopping center location often cited by staff whose museums are located in malls is limited space for expansion. With rent-paying stores on either side, it is difficult for these museums to add additional space as other museums, with their own freestanding buildings, might. The Bellevue Art Museum does not have space to display its permanent collection. The Los Angeles Children's Museum's attendance of 250,000 a year is considered full capacity given its space. The Museum of Scientific Discovery, pinched for space, is negotiating a lease for an adjacent store that is vacant. Because of its rapid growth and limited space, the museum is, according to Smith, "redefining our mission; we can't grow, so we are engaging in outreach programs, teacher training and curriculum writing, and exploring off-hour use of the museum."

Related to the problems of expansion are siting considerations. The Bellevue Art Museum considers its third-floor site a problem, even though the museum is located in the mall's center, because there is little pedestrian traffic on the third floor. To attract attention, banners are hung from the third floor. Olbrantz advises museums in malls "to consider siting and physical layout, and to seek a proviso for expansion."

Another problem peculiar to museums in shopping malls is a requirement imposed by some shopping centers that all tenants, including museums, keep uniform hours.

Children's museums in shopping malls have been accused of being more day-care centers than museums, but the Los Angeles Children's Museum (left) and the Museum of Scientific Discovery (below) have structured their programming so that parents do not drop their children off while they shop.

The American Museum of Quilts and Related Arts found the retail hours 10:00 A.M. to 9:00 P.M. on Thursdays and Fridays, and everyday during Christmas season, particularly undesirable. "It was almost impossible to get volunteers to work the late hours, so we had to hire paid staff to work them," says Debs-Miyata. The Los Angeles Children's Museum's branch location would like to close during school hours, claims Woolley; "It kills us having to be open on weekdays when kids are in school."

Only the American Museum of Quilts and Related Arts had difficulty with public acceptance of a museum in a shopping center. "It's hard to explain to people why you're in a shopping mall," says Debs-Miyata; "We also experienced problems with the museum community's accepting our legitimacy as a museum."

Partly to enhance its image as a quilt museum, but mostly to satisfy an original goal to have and control its own location, the quilt museum bought and renovated a Spanish-Mediterranean-style house in downtown San Jose for its new home. The museum always wanted its own site, and saw its mall location as short term until it could raise the funds to buy its own building. Grateful to El Paseo de Saratoga, Debs-Miyata acknowledges, "We couldn't have started without the free space."

A Final Assessment

Despite the problems of operating out of a shopping center, most every museum staff member interviewed for this article would encourage other museums to consider a shopping center location, with caveats. Smith of the Museum of Scientific Discovery has no reservations about his choice of a mall location. "I would intentionally choose a mall site again," he asserts; "Sure there are problems, but they're not insurmountable, and the benefits are great: tremendous exposure, support from influential people in the downtown area and joint advertising."

Olbrantz of the Bellevue Art Museum would also recommend a mall location, but he cautions about the importance of the site chosen within the mall. "Inside Bellevue Square is better than our previous separate location, but we would rather be in the center on the ground floor and act as an anchor." Woolley of the Los Angeles Children's Museum, in retrospect, feels that "if starting from scratch, we would look for space with heavier children traffic than the L.A. Mall, although not a crowded location." Debs-Miyata of the American Museum of Quilts and Related Arts says, "I would certainly recommend a mall location, so long as management recognizes the museum for what it is, and lets it keep museum hours."

For their part, shopping centers seem equally happy with the relationship and recommend that other shopping centers consider housing museums. Strawberry Square sees its science museum as a unique asset. Bellevue Square is pleased with its art museum. Carey, of El Paseo de Saratoga, sums up her shopping center's perspective: "I would encourage other malls to have museums as tenants; the benefits are worth the forgone rent." Δ

Caring for Collections

Susan J. Bandes

Strategies for Conservation and Documentation

Panelists at the AAM annual meeting in June discussed the results of the NEH project on collections care.

The care of collections is a primary responsibility of all museums. As repositories of our national heritage, museums are responsible for preserving and maintaining their collections and for researching, recording and communicating information about them. Yet members of the museum profession have increasingly recognized that the vast resources museum collections represent are inhibited from full service to society by the limited capacity of museums to organize their holdings in ways meaningful for research, by the fragile condition of many objects and by the lack of a coherent statement of widely accepted priorities for the management and preservation of collections.

It is ironic that the activities that ensure the survival of collections — conservation, collections maintenance and collections management — are among the most demanding of all museum functions but are also the least visible to the public. Many of our country's major museums are housed in aging structures, without adequate storage or exhibition facilities. Often these buildings have insufficient environmental controls and security. While major collections are adequately cataloged and organized, most are in need of massive reorganization. Many small mu-

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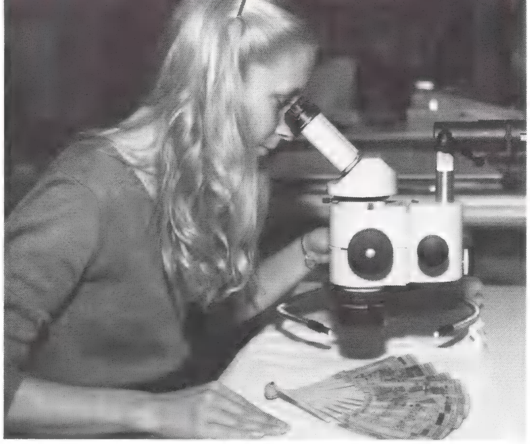


Caring for collections often involves procedures that are both tedious and precise. Textiles, archeological objects, paintings and sculptures each require different kinds of conservation techniques. All too often, the public is not aware of the complex and diverse needs of these collections.

seums are without even a basic inventory. Almost all museums need to make an increased commitment to a comprehensive collections management program involving inventorying, cataloging, photographing and storing collections data in some retrievable form.

As stewards of these collections, museums must also provide information about the objects in them. Without the ability to manage documentation of these collections, museums can articulate very little about their meaning toward an understanding of ourselves and the world in which we live.

In the fall of 1983, the American Association of Museums received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to organize a series of five colloquiums on the needs of collections essential to the humanities. In each day-and-a-half meeting, participants reviewed the current status of museum collections, assessed the areas of greatest need and recommended strategies for increasing the level of care to ensure their survival into the future.

Arthur Beale, director of the Center for Conservation and Technical Studies at the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, chaired the colloquium on conservation. Other chairmen included Roland Force, the director of Museum of the American Indian in New York City (colloquium on documentation); Russell Fridley, director of the Minnesota Historical Society in St. Paul (colloquium on history); Raymond Thompson, director of the Arizona State Museum, University of Arizona in Tucson (colloquium on ethnography and archeology); and Evan Turner, director of the Cleveland Museum of Art (colloquium on art). Turner also served as chairman of the project's advisory committee. The colloquiums were held from January through April of 1984 in Boston, Washington, Berkeley, Tucson and Philadelphia, respectively.

Participating in the colloquiums were a total of 57 museum professionals representing art, archeology, ethnography, history and historic sites, natural history, parks and science museums. There were museum directors, curators, registrars, collections managers, conservators and conservation scientists, museum computer experts, trustees and academic scholars, from private, state and federal institutions, university and college museums and private foundations, in the United States as well as Canada.

Although participants discussed problems specific to art, history, archeology and ethnography collections, a consensus emerged of the issues surrounding collections maintenance, collections management and conservation that crossed disciplinary boundaries. Indeed, the priorities and recommendations arrived at as a result of the discussions are pertinent for museums of all types. They are listed and described below. These points as well as the nature of collections care generally are expanded on in the report of the Collections Needs Project that will be published by the AAM this fall. It will be distributed throughout the museum and conservation communities and available from the AAM on request.

Priorities and Recommendations from the AAM Collections Needs Project

Priorities for Collections Care

The goal of the museum community should be to achieve a collective rededication of America's museums to the improved care and increased use of collections that are, in fact, a major national resource. This can best be accomplished by addressing the following priorities for collections care, management and use:

- **Improve environmental conditions for collections,**

- **Inventory, register and catalog objects to achieve documentary control of collections,**

- **Conserve objects in collections,**

- **Expand knowledge through in-depth research on collections,**

- **Enhance public understanding of museum collections through the dissemination of information about them.**

The priorities and recommendations set forth here reflect the conviction that the nation's permanent collections are finite and nonrenewable resources and that the nation has an obligation to care for them and provide support for their welfare. The report suggests ways to make these collections more accessible now while ensuring that they will be preserved for the use of future generations.

The five priorities are intended to encourage an expansion rather than change the current commitments of the nation's museums. The overarching goals are to preserve and maintain the collections and to research, record and communicate information about them. The priorities are interrelated and must be approached and addressed simultaneously. Better physical environments are necessary to stabilize the conditions of objects. Successful collections management is a step toward establishing institutional commitments for care and access and will lead logically to the development of priorities for the conservation of specific objects, the expansion of research on collections and a renewed awareness of the need to safeguard these national treasures. For each priority, long- and short-term projects may be undertaken by individual museums as well as cooperative efforts supported by the entire museum community. All depend upon the allocation of personnel and resources at each museum, the commitments by individuals or cooperating institutions at the local, regional and national levels and the dedication of funds by private and public sector supporters of the museum world.

Strategies for the Improvement of Collections: Recommendations for Action

1. Collections Maintenance to Enhance the Physical Environments of Collections

- *Establish and widely disseminate minimal environmental standards* for collections in storage and exhibition areas.

- *Upgrade environmental conditions* in existing facilities to meet standards and implement an ongoing program to maintain and improve them.

- *Undertake periodic condition and curatorial surveys* of collections.

- *Encourage research* on improved storage facilities and specialized equipment, and disseminate this information widely.

- *Provide for information sharing* and specialized training in collections maintenance.

2. Collections Management and Documentation to Gain Control of Collections

- *Improve documentation* through comprehensive inventories that will help achieve the minimum level of collections control and accessibility.

- *Expand in-depth research on collections* on an ongoing basis to upgrade catalog information and increase data on collections.

- *Encourage systematic photography* of collections as an essential part of documentation.

- *Take greater advantage of computer technology* in collections management and promote the development of cooperative information systems that share common or compatible vocabularies.

- *Upgrade the education of museum professionals* responsible for collections management and ex-

pand training programs in this area. Encourage information sharing on a regional, national and international basis.

3. Conservation of Collections

• *Establish priorities and commitments* of personnel and financial resources to implement programs for the treatment of collections.

• *Expand the use of collections technicians* whose responsibility it is to assist in the basic maintenance of collections. Develop guidelines and initiate new programs for their training.

• *Expand financial support for existing regional conservation laboratories* so that they can continue their clearinghouse, training and public service functions.

• *Expand educational efforts* in conservation with special attention to underdeveloped specialties such as conservation science and ethnographic and archeological conservation.

• *Expand scientific research* on conservation techniques, materials and problems. Special attention should be given to encouraging collaborative efforts among conservation laboratories, universities, museums and private industry.

• *Develop networks* and promote the sharing of resources among institutions and conservators.

• *Improve channels of communication* between conservators and other museum professionals.

4. Enhanced Public Understanding of the Use and Care of Collections

• *Increase public awareness* of the needs of collections by encouraging a conservation component in exhibitions, publications and public programs.

• *Increase awareness* of conservation and documentation problems among museum professionals.

• *Develop long-range plans.* Museum directors and governing boards, together with the curatorial, conservation and registration staffs, should develop these plans and include in them the commitment of ongoing institutional support to address the conservation and documentation needs of the collection.

• *Expand the role of conservation and documentation specialists* in decision making and policy development, especially in areas of acquisitions, exhibitions, loans and other collections-related issues.

• *Develop and maintain comprehensive information* about the condition, accessibility and safety of the nation's museum collections in order to provide periodic evaluations of current needs and conditions.

Implementation of the Recommendations

To implement the recommendations for collections maintenance, collections management and conservation, the first step for a museum is to assess current conditions and review its mission and the way it uses its collections. To attain the ultimate goal of preventing the further deterioration of the objects, these condition and curatorial surveys must precede the initiation of all specific programs.

Different institutions face different levels of need. On the whole, smaller museums need self-study programs and consultation and survey grants to secure basic curatorial and conservation advice in developing priorities. Larger institutions are, for the most part, farther ahead in the area of collections welfare. Although they may also need collections surveys, conservation treatments are more likely to be in order. A tiered approach to the implementation of recommendations is, therefore, desirable.

Conservation and documentation are two sides of the same coin, and those responsible for these functions must work together to assure the well-being of collections. Increased museum staff cooperation among curators, conservators and registrars will lead to greater benefits for collections as a whole. Museums with curators and conservators on staff must encourage collaboration and the exchange of information among them to enhance their job performance. If, as is often the case in small history museums, there is not even a curator on staff, consultancy programs can help the existing staff achieve the minimal level of curatorial control. Curatorial expertise and conservation advice can be disseminated in the same way and perhaps at the same time. A regional curatorial center, for example, might join with a regional conservation laboratory in offering workshops and other programs. In general, the professionalism of the personnel responsible for both conservation and collections management must be upgraded. Education and training programs, additional publications and increased communications among conservators, registrars and collections managers will help achieve this goal. Δ

IN-HOUSE

All Together Now: The AAM Meets in Washington

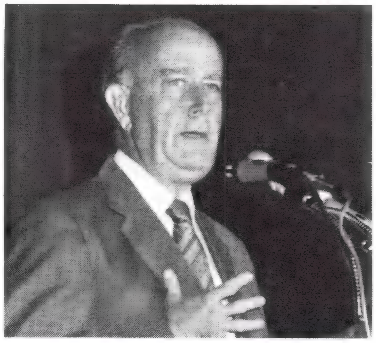
Tracey Linton Craig

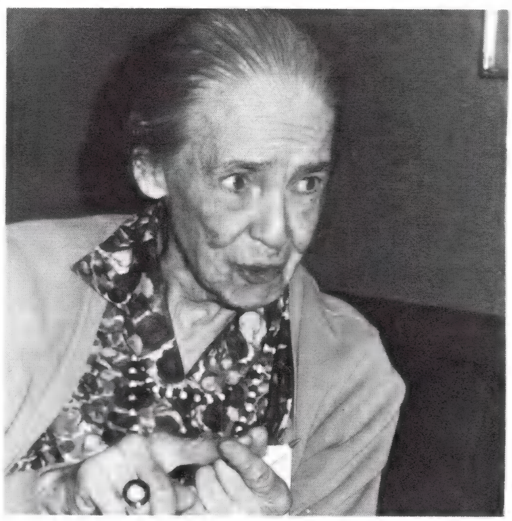
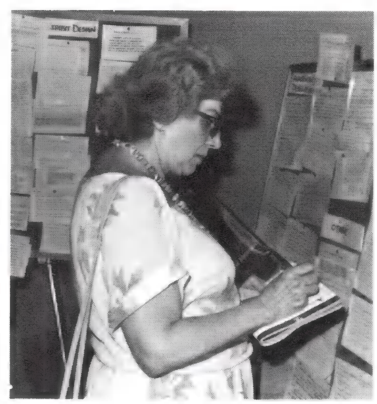
Take nearly 4,000 museum professionals. Put them in a city that has been called the museum capital of the world. Stir up with a couple of controversial session topics. Add a dash of politics, a bus or two that drops people at the wrong reception (but, Washington being the town it is, they don't know they're at the wrong place until at least an hour into the festivities). Place in a June heat wave, a scorcher that engulfed the nation's capital just as the meeting began. And you have the recipe for an exciting week in Washington.

As in the past, delegates at the 79th AAM Annual Meeting were concerned with the strengths of museums and how they fit into the larger community. This year, the theme "Museums in Service to America" helped meeting goers to focus on the philosophical place of museums in society — and on the role of the museum in their own home towns.

Museums, of course, have been in service to society for many years. But often, as Virginia Museum of Fine Arts director Paul Perrot pointed out in one session, they have been in service "in a temple of isolation to which only a few are invited." Echoing sentiments similar to those other speakers had voiced, Perrot continued, "Museums belong to all of us. In years past, we have given lip service to the idea of openness. Now we really *are* unlocking doors, asking all aspects of the community to come in." In one of the meeting's keynote addresses, Baltimore Mayor William Donald Schaefer put it even more

Tracey Linton Craig is associate editor on the AAM publications staff. Assisting in annual meeting coverage were Laurie E. Wertz, production editor, and Carolee Belkin Walker, assistant editor. Ginger Warren, executive secretary, donated her professional skills as a free-lance photographer to capture the annual meeting on film.



Top left clockwise: Baltimore mayor William Donald Schaefer; council members' reception; delegates' reception; placement office at the Sheraton; Senator Claiborne Pell (D-R.I.) is greeted by a delegate; delegates meet and discuss the day's events; Grace McCann Morley, recipient of the Distinguished Service to Museums Award.

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bluntly, "[You] must involve the community if the museum is to survive."

Schaefer, in whose political career cultural activities have played a major role, described the three-way partnership of private and public sectors and the museum world that has worked so well in his city. He helped to push through a one-percent bond issue to support arts programs in the inner city, inaugurated the mayor's ball that raises some $100,000 annually for community heritage projects and championed the recently completed aquarium that has helped to revitalize Baltimore's downtown harbor area. The city, as Schaefer sees it, is one big museum. Speaking from his experience, he told delegates, "Broad-based community support is very important. In order to get that support, museums must be a visible part of the community." The problem of making the museum visible and its presence felt in the community would come up again and again in the more than 100 meeting sessions.

Delegates raised other questions, too. If we ourselves are still struggling with defining what a museum is and should be, they said, if we are debating the reasons for the blatant absence of minorities from our staffs and fighting to change our elitist image, then how is it that we can present ourselves to the public, both as individual museums and the museum community as a whole? How can we share that personal commitment that makes us believe we're making a difference, inspires us to work long hours at often mundane work for execrable pay? As one woman put it, in an overheard conversation, "When you're offered a job in a field you're crazy about, you don't say you don't do windows!" How, delegates wondered, do we communicate that sense of purpose and excitement?

Even once the museum has defined itself, it must convey its image to the public. As Al Louer, director of media relations for Colonial Williamsburg, phrased it, "The ultimate survival of museums may depend on communicat-

ing our image." At sessions with titles like "Producing Public Service Announcements Good Enough for Prime Time," "Radio: The Overlooked Medium" and "Museums as News: How It Looks from the Other Side," outsiders advised delegates on how to get that message across.

Sarah Booth Conroy, who covers fine arts for the *Washington Post*, was among them. Her instructions were specific. "Invite the reporter to your museum for a day," she recommended.

> Tell her she's a great writer, the best since Updike. Show her the off-limits places, the diamond tiara, the freeze-dried rats. Introduce her to the characters in your museum. If by the end of the day she doesn't have a thousand ideas for a good story, she's not a reporter and you can't communicate. You have to give the newspaper an idea of just how fascinating the museum really is.

A session on "Cultural Tourism: Marketing the Museum Experience" illuminated similar issues. Luisa Kreisberg, director of public information for the Museum of Modern Art, lamented, "We're not very good at presenting ourselves. It's a terrible failing." She went on to recommend collaborative efforts at public relations, as well as in other areas. "Collaboration" was again a key word, in sessions where speakers advocated joint exhibition efforts, combined fund-raising drives and other forms of networking.

Other speakers addressing the future of museums agreed in principle with Kreisberg, who pointed out that "the main illness in the next decade is boredom — and we can do something about that."

Meeting speakers seemed to agree that the museum movement is on the cusp of a very different era. S. Dillon Ripley, outgoing secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, delivered a keynote address in which he said:

> Museums represent a force for the continuum of culture. Our mission is one of great seriousness and great fun. Museums refresh . . . and invigorate. That's what people who don't know about museums need to know. We must convince them that there's more to life. . . . If universities can't get them alive — and away from specialization — then it falls on our shoulders.

Ripley, who received an AAM certificate of appreciation for his contributions to the museum world, went on to say, "It is vitally important that the Smithsonian exists independently in the federal city. The mall . . . washes up against a pride of lions, lying out recumbent after a heavy meal. But Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer on the Hill is roaring," he cautioned. He was not the only one to address the issue of federal funding. High among delegates' concerns was the federal budget deficit that affects appropriations for the National Endowments for the Arts and the Humanities and other agencies that help preserve our cultural heritage.

But, as Representative Sidney Yates (D-Ill.) pointed out in his keynote address, the death knell has not yet been sounded for federal assistance. Yates, who received an honorary lifetime membership in the AAM for his efforts in championing federal support for the arts and museums, says he questions

Danielle Rice, curator of education, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., urges museum professionals to stress the museum's basic learning function during "Leaders for the Future," a session sponsored by the Commission on Museums for a New Century.

how best to provide that aid. "We in Congress look to the AAM for help and advice on museums," he noted, urging AAM members to take time to visit their congressional representatives while in town. (Some 200 did schedule appointments; others met informally with congressmen at eight state receptions.) Yates also spoke forcefully of his concern for more financial assistance for conservation efforts: "We still have not taken the steps we should to protect the historic and irreplaceable objects in our museums." Senator Claiborne Pell (D-R.I.), another longtime supporter of museums, also received an honorary lifetime AAM membership and used his speech as a vehicle to bring up the issue of conservation. He expressed the wish, "I'd like to see us graduating an additional 70 conservators a year."

We are on the brink of major change, speakers said in essence. The partnership with the government will continue, but there is increasing emphasis on assistance from the private sector. And in order to get the continuing support of our publics, we must know first what it is we offer, figure out how best to present and share it so that the entire community feels a part of the museum, free to enjoy what Ripley termed "gentle teaching." Quality of life counts for increasingly more these days — and museums are an important part of that intangible. After all, as J. Carter Brown, director of the National Gallery of Art, had said with tongue-in-cheek, "Museums are cool places."

Commission Sessions

The widely anticipated release of the report of the Commission on Museums for a New Century continued to spark discussions about the future at the meeting, and although the report won't become available until early October, museum professionals acquainted themselves with many of its themes in Washington.

"Racism and sexism continue to be this country's number one dilemma . . . and museums reflect this," said Malcolm Arth, chairman of the Department of Education at the American Museum of Natural History and panelist on the commission-sponsored session "Two Decades of Outreach: Museums in Service to a Pluralistic Society." Like many panelists, Arth stressed the continued public role of

museums and called for a fuller commitment to addressing the cultural needs of a pluralistic society.

"Faces for the Future," a panel of young leaders nominated by commission members, challenged session participants to confront the 21st century with practicality and idealism. Both Timothy Chester, chief curator and decorative arts curator at the Louisiana State Museum, and Danielle Rice, curator of education for the National Gallery of Art, stressed the museum's learning function. Rice emphasized the museum's ability to expose people to the roots of creativity, calling on museums to offer their publics "a way to quench their thirst for knowledge by giving them water instead of wine."

How museums interact in the information age, the increased threat of nuclear holocaust and how inventions made today will be used 25 years from now were issues given top priority by panelist Jim Czarniecki III, director of the Minnesota Museum of Art, and Viki Sand, director of the Shaker Museum in Old Chatham, New York, who was concerned that museums, as public institutions, have the capacity "to hurt people." She noted that museums can deprive cultural and other minorities of "their birthright," their right to know about the art and artifacts of their heritage.

Other commission sessions included "Sharing the Classroom: New Partnerships for Museums and Schools" and "Twenty Questions: What the Future Holds for Museums."

AAM Business

More than 1,770 AAM members cast ballots in the 1984 election of officers and councilors-at-large, who took office on June 11 at the association's annual business meeting.

Thomas W. Leavitt, director of the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art,

While evenings were made for socializing, the days offered no-nonsense workshops, many filled to capacity.

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Cornell University, was elected to a third term as president. The four new vice-presidents are Katherine Lochridge, former director of the Heckscher Museum in New York; Robert R. Macdonald, director of the Louisiana State Museum in New Orleans; Harry S. Parker III, director of the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts; and Harold K. Skramstad, Jr., president of the Edison Institute, Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village, Dearborn, Michigan.

AAM secretary for 1984 is Robert B. Burke, director of the Smithsonian Institution's Office of Protection Services. Elaine Heumann Gurian, director of the Boston Children's Museum Exhibit Center, will serve as treasurer. All officers serve one-year terms.

Five councilors-at-large were elected to serve three-year terms. They are Malcolm Arth, chairman of the Department of Education at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City; Michael Botwinick, director of the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.; Pamela Johnson, associate director of the San Antonio Museum Association; Charles McLaughlin, executive director of the Natural History Museum in San Diego; and Patterson B. Williams, director of education at the Denver Art Museum. Teri Y. Doke, executive director of the Afro-American Historical and Cultural Museum in Philadelphia, was elected to fill a vacancy on the council. She will serve for one year.

Members of two regional museum associations also elected delegates to the council. Raymond L. Breun, development officer for the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial in St. Louis (Midwest), and Carl H. Aiken, executive director of the Houston Museum of Natural Science (Mountain-Plains), will serve for three years. The New England, Northeast, Southeast and Western regions will hold elections later this fall.

At its June 9 meeting, the AAM Council elected a Nominating Committee. Each year the Nominating Committee prepares the slate for the

election of AAM officers and councilors-at-large. This year the council elected Franklin Kneedler, deputy director of the Mystic Seaport Museum, Connecticut, as chairman. Committee members are Marena Grant Morrisey, executive director of the Loch Haven Art Center in Orlando, Florida, and Lorin I. Nevling, Jr., director of the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago. Edmund Barry Gaither, director of the Museum of the National Center of Afro-American Artists in Boston, was elected as alternate.

Museum professionals with suggestions for the 1985 slate should contact Franklin Kneedler, Deputy Director, Mystic Seaport Museum Inc., Greenmanville Ave., Mystic, Conn. 06355; (203) 572-0711. The committee will meet in the early fall to consider suggestions and will then present its report to the council in January 1985.

AAM Awards

At the meeting, the AAM conferred its Distinguished Service Award on Grace McCann Morley, a pioneer in the museum field. Morley, who served as director of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and later headed the National Museum in New Delhi, India, is known primarily for her work in the international museum arena.

Also at the meeting, Mrs. John D. Rockefeller III, president of the Museum of Modern Art, announced the establishment of the Nancy Hanks Memorial Award for Museum Service, a special award for young museum professionals. The award is designed to honor the memory of Nancy Hanks, who, during her lifetime, was a great friend and champion of museums throughout the country. As chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts for eight years, Hanks established NEA's funding program for museums and also the challenge grant program. She called national attention to the importance of the arts and culture in our society, and under her leadership the NEA budget increased from $15 million to $24 million.

The Nancy Hanks Award will be presented annually to a museum professional under 35 years of age who has made an outstanding contribution to his or her institution. It carries with it a $1,000 honorarium to assist the recipient's professional development. George Seybolt, former head of the National Museum Services Board, has contributed the first two years' funding for the award. The AAM will create an endowment to ensure continued support.

In announcing the establishment of the Nancy Hanks Award at the annual business meeting, Rockefeller noted that she herself was fortunate to know Nancy Hanks throughout her career. "Nancy set high standards for herself and others," said Rockefeller. "Her total commitment . . . was a source of encouragement and inspiration to all who worked with her." Rockefeller added, "I feel it is particularly fitting that her name be associated with an award that recognizes talent and achievement among younger members of the profession."

To be considered for the award, individuals are nominated by the director or a trustee of their institution; they must be 35 or under as of the time of the award's presentation in June. The dead-

line for nominations for the 1985 award is February 1, 1985. For more details, contact Clare Bouton at the AAM.

Committee Activities

The AAM's annual meeting always serves as a focus for the activities of a multitude of special interest groups, and this year there were more groups, and more activities, than ever. AAM standing professional and other committees representing the interests of small museums, curators, educators, public relations officers, registrars, security personnel, trustees, professionals engaged in development and membership, nonprint media and museum evaluation, and those concerned with legislative developments affecting museums, sponsored sessions and gathered early in the morning for breakfast business meetings. Affiliated organizations, too, held meetings and organized sessions on issues pertaining to their special interests. The AAM was pleased to play host to the activities of, among others, the African-American Museums Association, the Association of College and University Museums and Galleries, the Association of Science Museum Directors, the Association of Science-Technology Centers, the Committee on Military Museums in America, the Museum Education Roundtable, the Museum Store Association, the National Association of Museum Exhibition and the United States Association of Museum Volunteers.

Members of the AAM Trustee Committee had a particularly full agenda during the annual meeting. The committee developed several sessions and offered interesting special activities for its members.

Sandra Butler, vice-chairman of the board of the Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts, chaired a session on "Board Orientation," outlining how an orientation program can serve as a frame of reference for new trustees and help renew commitment to the museum's mission among other board members. Anne Morgan, chairman of the board of the Worcester Art Museum, chaired a panel on "Board-Staff Relationships" that focused on ways for establishing and maintaining solid working relationships between the museum's board of trustees and its staff members.

Another session that discussed the future of museums was "Planning for Change," led by John Bok, trustee of the Boston Children's Museum. Two additional sessions were cosponsored with other AAM standing professional committees.

Trustees also had a chance to enjoy a day trip to Historic Annapolis, including visits to the William Paca House, the Hammond-Harwood House and the 1780 Maryland State House, the oldest state house still in use in the nation. Receptions and special dinners filled many of the evening hours. On Monday night, for example, trustees enjoyed cocktails at the home of Senator and Mrs. Claiborne Pell, followed by dinner at the Washington Club.

More than 98 exhibitors joined this year's roster of participants. The exhibit hall continued to be the meeting area for both delegates and museum-related vendors.

Exhibit Hall

"The best marketing strategy I did for myself this year was to exhibit at the 1984 annual AAM meeting." This observation, from the inventor of the Polycase, a demountable exhibit case new to the museum field, reflected the overall feeling of the exhibitors at the annual meeting's exhibit hall, which was open for three and one-half days of the five-day meeting. Laura Lada-Mocarski's satisfaction was voiced by other exhibitors as well.

In addition to attracting huge numbers of delegates, the aura of Washington drew the largest collection of museum suppliers ever — 98 in all, causing the exhibit hall to be sold out two months before the meeting. The diversity of travel and publishing representatives, technology experts, exhibit designers and builders, fund-raising consultants, life science and human figures suppliers, art auction houses, archival materials vendors, storage systems developers and insurance and moving companies enticed meeting goers to stroll through the exhibit hall's aisles again and again.

Two resource centers, the Traveling Exhibitions Exchange and the National Association of Museum Exhibition (NAME), were housed for the first time in the exhibit hall, making — as advertising manager Maureen McNamara put it, with a smile — "for a tight ship, and lots of happy faces."

Credits

But none of the 1984 annual meeting would have been possible without the time, attention and care devoted to it by planners. Special thanks go to J. Carter Brown, director of the National Gallery of Art, who served as general chairman, and to former Smithsonian secretary S. Dillon Ripley, who served as honorary chairman. Honorary vice-chairman was Paul Perrot, director of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts; program chairman was Michael Botwinick, director of the Corcoran Gallery of Art. Douglas Evelyn, deputy director of the National Museum of American History, supervised local arrangements. Marifred Cilella, special activities coordinator on the AAM staff, managed somehow to pull all of the often confusing details together, with assistance from the National Program Committee, the hospitality and volunteer committees, AAM staffers and a host of Smithsonian volunteers who helped out everywhere from the staff rooms to the special events on and off the Mall.

Finales

While sessions at the AAM annual meeting are important, many meeting goers say it's the after-hours events that really make it all worthwhile. For nearly a full week, all kinds of museum professionals are meeting in a congenial, relaxed atmosphere. New ideas are tossed around over a scotch-on-the-rocks, the director from Wichita Falls hears the latest about San Diego's programs, exhibit plans for the future are unveiled over a steak dinner. Folks do business with museum suppliers in the exhibit hall, discuss new books, meet with the movers and shakers, and catch up with old friends once again.

The 1984 meeting was much more than just sessions and speeches. The social events were planned to provide a

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sample of as many Washington area museums as possible. Myriad receptions brought together MUSEUM NEWS authors and advertisers at the Museum of Modern Art of Latin America; University of Delaware museum program graduates gathered at the Old Post Office Building; the Women Museum Directors and Administrators Caucus shared concerns at the Textile Museum; new AAM members were introduced for the first time at the Sheraton Washington Hotel itself.

Monday evening meeting goers explored the Smithsonian museums on the Mall, which were open late by special arrangement. Tuesday they visited Dumbarton Oaks and a host of museums in the Dupont-Kalorama and Capitol Hill neighborhoods. Wednesday brought them down to the Mall again for a progressive dinner. The National

Meeting other museum professionals, making new friends and catching up with old ones were highlights of the meeting. Above: on the boat to Mount Vernon; below: exchanging business cards in the exhibit hall.

Gallery of Art offered cocktails, a string quartet and, by the wall of water in the East Wing, a terrific rock band—by day diligent conservators and exhibit technicians, by night the swinging, uninhibited Del Ray Desperados. Big band music filled the Air and Space Museum, where gourmet picnic boxes awaited. The Hirshhorn, dramatically illuminated under Washington's starry, steamy night sky, featured break dancing and light desserts.

Thursday night revelers faced a difficult choice. They could picnic at the National Zoo; take a breezy riverboat cruise down the Potomac to Mount Vernon for dinner and then on to candlelit Woodlawn Plantation for 18th-century dancing, blueberry trifle and free-flowing champagne; or savor Virginia country life — and cooking — at Dranesville Tavern and Colvin Run Mill, two historic sites in Fairfax County.

Meeting goers may have taken time off to let their hair down a bit, but they were never far from the reason they are in the business to begin with. And they talked museums. They shared news of job openings — 168 positions were advertised at the meeting, and more than a handful of delegates went home with fingers crossed and hopes of new challenges. They checked in at the Museum Living Room to view videotapes and slide presentations from other museums. They met with their congressional representatives on the Hill in offices and reception rooms. They consulted with AAM staffers about MAP and accreditation and got the kind of first-hand information no letter or phone call can provide. People met in the expansive hotel lobby, a light- and plant-filled atrium, and talked till all hours; a few never even made it to the sessions.

The *Washington Post* reported it was "the largest gathering of museum professionals in history anywhere in the world." It was a heady experience to be surrounded by some 4,000 like-minded people who shared many similar concerns while representing the diversity of America's museums. Art, history, science — yet there was a sense of unified purpose that came from several days of intense discussion, hard work and hard play.

By Friday, many were ready to spend the day recuperating by the hotel pool before returning home to share what they had learned. Δ

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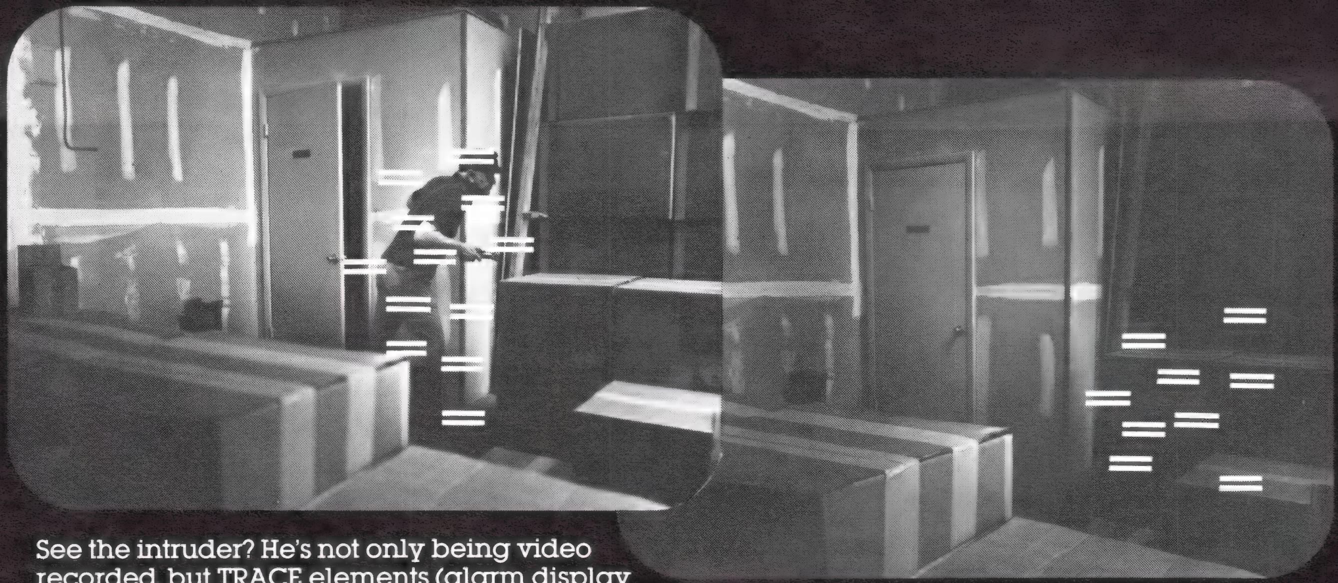

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BOOKS

Museums, Humanities and Educated Eyes

Edited by Marilyn Stokstad, Janey Levey St. George, Philip S. Humphrey and Marie Adams. Lawrence, Kans.: University of Kansas, 1982. 213 pp., $5.

Reviewed by Patrick H. Butler III

Museums, Humanities and Educated Eyes, edited by Marilyn Stokstad et al., is the final report of a project, "The Humanist in the Museum," funded by the Division of Educational Programs of the National Endowment for the Humanities at the University of Kansas in Lawrence from 1977 to 1980. This report is a suggestive work that may be used on a number of levels by museum educators and may serve as an aid in the design of projects other than those on the college level, which are the focus of this book. In addition, the book is an instructive introduction to ways in which museums might work with the Division of Educational Programs of NEH in designing other landmark museum education projects.

In this instance, the focus of the work was the university classroom and the museum. Beginning in the fall of 1977, academics in a number of disciplines—first at the University of Kansas and then at other schools in the area — worked with museum staff members to make effective use of the collections in the university's museums as a part of their regular course work. The museum community at Kansas is notable and, at the time, was being enriched by the addition of the Helen Foresman Spencer Museum of Art. The natural science collections have been carefully developed over the years, and these resources, combined with the Kenneth Spencer Research Library holdings, provide many opportunities for a variety of work in the humanities.

The bulk of the book consists of reports by faculty members who participated in the project. The prologue, however, is a series of useful essays placing the project in the context of the history of museums and museum education, both at Kansas and in the American museum community. The authors of these essays point in particular to the relative lack of interest on the part of many academics in the holdings of their university or community museums. Somehow a slide appears to be more satisfactory than the real artifact, even though the particular artifact might not be a "monument." Yet, the fault for this situation lies within the museum as well as within the general academic community. Many members of museum staffs tend to study objects without much concern for the use of their research. Others try to develop programs without a great deal of concern for the specific needs of the classroom teacher. Clearly, the leaders of "The Humanist in the Museum" did not make those mistakes.

The reports by project participants are most informative. Faculty members from departments of English, literature, theater, the fine arts (including music), foreign language, history, religion, anthropology and psychology explain how they used museum collections in a variety of ways to make their courses come alive. The quality of these reports is uneven; some are bare descriptions of activities, while others include discussions of rationale and effect. Essays by W. Stitt Robinson in history, Robert Anderson in modern language, Robert Copeland in music history, Thurston Moore in literature and J. Theodore Johnson in writing are particularly enlightening. This variety of soundly described projects makes the book a valuable tool for anyone seeking ways to involve university faculty in the museum. Moreover, the ideas that were developed for college-level course work may be applied to secondary-level courses with equal effect.

In all, *Museums, Humanities and Educated Eyes* is a valuable resource for both the museum and the teaching communities. Even the less successful project reports are useful, and the introduction presents a rationale for similar projects that might be funded from local sources in other areas. Most important, the report demonstrates that, if museums are to be successful as educational institutions, their staffs must go into the community with an open mind, seeking to match collections with existing needs while also developing materials in company with educators to meet newly identified needs.

PATRICK H. BUTLER III is curator of collections for the Harris County Heritage Society in Houston, Texas.

How to Buy Software: The Master Guide to Picking the Right Program

Alfred Glossbrenner. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984. 648 pp. Paperbound, $14.95.

Reviewed by Bruce H. Evans

The age of computers isn't coming anymore. It is already here. There may not be a computer in every museum in the country yet, but I don't think it will be long before even the most pecunious nonprofits realize that instead of replacing the worn-out

BRUCE H. EVANS is director of the Dayton Art Institute in Dayton, Ohio.

BOOKS

IBM Selectric for about $1,000 they can acquire a machine that will do the same typing as well as accounting, membership, development and even collection management for just a few dollars more. Even now — and we are still in the infancy of the microcomputer age — machines that can do all this are available for well under $2,000. Why don't we all have them? Probably one of the primary reasons is that we don't understand them very well and, thus, are a little afraid of them. Strangely enough, one group of people that actually ends up fostering this fear of computers is the computer sales force.

Anyone who has actually dared to venture into the newest phenomenon of the 1980s — the high-tech computer salesroom — can no doubt attest to the fact that 1984 newspeak really exists.

> Well, sir, you are sure to love this model. It operates under CP/M and MSDOS because it is based on the 8086 (and I wouldn't tell *just anyone* but they're coming out with a 68000 chip that can run UNIX!) Right now, this baby has 512K ram and 64K rom, 2 390K floppies and an optional 20meg hard disk. All you need is a modem, a spooler and a daisywheel and you're up and running.

And we thought that museum jargon was bad! The real problem with the computer sales people is that these hackers (we used to call people who wore pens and pencils in plastic shirt-pocket protectors "nerds"; now they are called "hackers") are trying to sell computers. By themselves, however, computers can't do *anything*. They are simply pieces of metal and glass and silicon that can take orders beautifully as long as there is a translator present. The translator, the link, between your fingers on the keyboard and the words that you want to appear on the screen or at the printer is the software. The hardware, of course, is the computer. (There is "firmware," too!)

The question that any computer salesman should ask first is, What do you want a computer to do? The obvious answer from the uninitiated is, Everything. It is a real Catch-22: we cannot ask for what we don't understand, but the store shouldn't sell us something that won't do what we need and there is no place to learn what we really do want without being required to use the machine we went in to buy in the first place (and didn't understand).

Now, however, that situation has changed. Alfred Glossbrenner's *How to Buy Software* is the first book I have seen that puts all this high-tech newspeak into simple and even humorous English. The whole subject is really quite simple, and we finally have an author who can make it easily understandable.

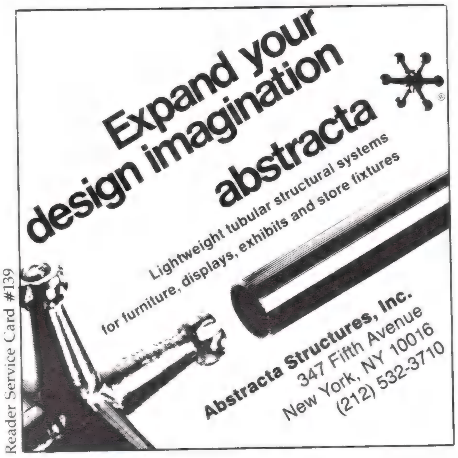
Even though the title implies that the book deals only with software (the product that makes your machine become a word processor or a number

cruncher or a file manager), there is much, much more than that here. Glossbrenner starts with the machines themselves and explains in nontechnical detail what goes on inside one of those boxes. He explains what an "operating system" is and why a computer cannot function without one. He explains the differences among programming languages. (Nonhackers will probably never need to write a program in their lives. Still, when you are buying a new software package for your computer, the speed of execution of the package may well depend on the language it was originally written in.) And finally, Glossbrenner begins to talk about software.

Once you have finished this book, you need never cringe before a computer pusher again. You can be the hit of the cocktail circuit, if you want to, with your scintillating conversation of bits and bytes, rams and roms. A word processor will be perceived as clearly separate from an office Cuisinart; a spreadsheet will not be something elastic for the guest bedroom; and an RDBMS will be something that you simply cannot live without. The best part of this book is that it goes far beyond telling you what these different applications packages are and can do. Glossbrenner actually tells his readers how to shop for them.

One of the best chapters in the book is entitled "Documentation and Demonstration." (Documentation, for the not-yet initiated, simply means instruction book, and many of them are atrocious—written by programmers instead of writers and clearly aimed at other programmers.) Glossbrenner's subheads in this single chapter are indicative of the thoroughness of the entire book: Software Quality in a Single Point; You're Not Buying a Program, You're Buying a "Package"; Seven Steps to Pick the Right Program; How to Find a Good Salesperson; The Truth about Documentation; The Documentation Evaluation Checklist; How to Set up a Demo; The "Going Bare" Test; How to "Break" a Personal Computer Program; What to Look for in a Dealer; and A Word about Warranties.

In subsequent chapters, Grossbrenner outlines exactly what to expect from and how to evaluate software in virtually every possible area of potential need. Word processing, spelling checkers, spreadsheets, filing and database



In the next issue of MUSEUM NEWS . . .

Museums Inside Out

Read about why museums should let the public in on what goes on behind the scenes—and how:

- William Ruder, on why museums need a better public image
- Kathleen Berrin, on public conservation exhibitions
- Elvie Turner, on what zoos do besides exhibit animals
- Steven Hamp, on putting the museum's mission on display

BOOKS

management, communications, graphics, personal finance, games and educational packages are only a few of the areas covered in this exhaustive, but never exhausting, volume. The author even tells you how to get free software (you guessed it — in computerese, it's "freeware") by connecting your computer to your telephone and dialing special computer bulletin boards where public domain software is yours for the downloading (sorry, I'm catching newspeak).

Another fascinating aspect of Glossbrenner's book is the frequent inclusion in the text of little boxes containing what he calls "SoftTips." These are actually tips that relate parenthetically to the subject under discussion. By presenting them in boxes, Glossbrenner eliminates the need to integrate them grammatically into the text and thus eliminates what would have been another few hundred pages. Besides, they are easier to find in this highlighted fashion.

As you may have guessed, I'm already hooked up to a computer and am writing this on my trusty Kaypro. I only wish that I had found *How to Buy Software: The Master Guide to Picking the Right Program* beforehand. I probably would have made the same purchase decision, but I would have understood what I was buying and what it would and would not do. I also would have eliminated completely the *Sturm und Drang* of those first few weeks spent in head-to-head confrontation with something that spoke a different language and wouldn't do what I told it to do.

This book can do more to bring your museum into the 21st century than any hundred volumes on future planning and preparedness. Δ

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SKIN DEEP a new exhibit at the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago designed by INSTITUTIONAL SERVICES, INC. to communicate more than just outward appearance. And communicate it does. Visitors explore this complex organ through participation and direct interaction discovering that they brought a vital part of the exhibit with them — their own skin.

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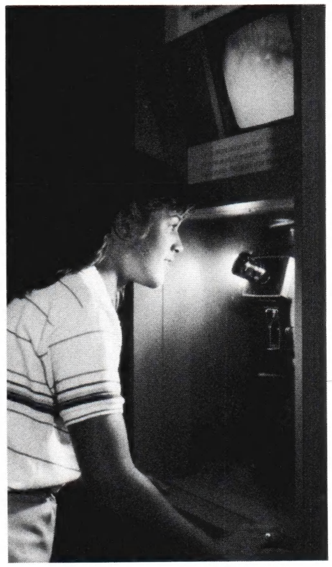

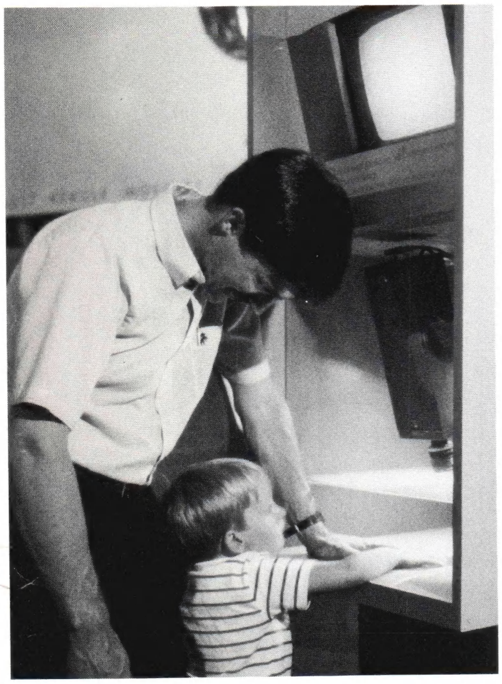

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